Examining The Implications Of International Interests On Arctic Governance Structures In The Wake Of Rapid Change

by

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A thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Art in Environmental Policy

at

Memorial University of Newfoundland
Grenfell Campus
Corner Brook, Newfoundland and Labrador
June 2018

Abstract

The current debate on governance in the Arctic suggests that growing influences and rapid change occurring in the Arctic are outside the scope and mandate of the Arctic Council. As new states and political entities continue to express interest in Arctic affairs, recent patterns spectacularly legitimize the proposition that the Arctic council may not be well equipped to handle and adjust to these changes occurring in the Arctic; however, the Arctic Council is modeled as an arena for diplomacy. The study seeks to examine the implications of international interests with regard to the structure of governance in the Arctic, by particularly studying the Arctic Council and its present mode of operations. To achieve the study's aim, an analysis of international interest from the perspectives of two foremost international relations paradigms was conducted. Findings illustrate that realist predictions are unable to truncate predominant liberalist features of Arctic international politics, and that international interests for the Arctic region are incapable of disrupting the existing political landscape of the Arctic due to its very potent liberalist character. Contrary wise, a realist scenario of systemic, gradual ascension to power by non-arctic stakeholders due to weaknesses of the Artic Council's structure is not completely unimaginable.

Keywords: Arctic region, Arctic Council, governance structures, international politics, institutions

Acknowledgements

I owe my thanks to many, first, to God Almighty for bringing me this far. It has indeed been a wonderful journey. Second, to my supervisor Dr Andreas Klinke, for choosing me, and for agreeing to be my supervisor, for the encouragement and most especially, for the patience. I also would like to recognize and thank my thesis committee member Dr. Gabriela Sabau, thank you for your immense support.

Third, I would like to extend my appreciation to my closest friends for their motivation and advice and encouragement throughout the process. Hope, you are awesome!

My deepest gratitude goes to the indispensable faculty and staff of Environmental Policy Institute (Grenfell Campus), Dr Kelly Vodden, your tutoring went a long way in helping me scope this thesis, thank you Dr. Paul Foley, Paula Dawe, and super human Nadia Simmons, thank you for taking good care of us.

Finally, I dedicate this thesis to my wonderful family and to the memory of my late Mum.

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List of Terms and Abbreviations

A5: Arctic five (Canada, Denmark, Norway, Russia and the United States)

A8: Arctic eight (the abovementioned five, plus Finland, Sweden and Iceland)

AC: Arctic Council

ACAP: Arctic Contaminants Action Programme

ACIA: Arctic Climate Impact Assessment

AEPS: Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy

AHDR: Arctic Human Development Report

AMAP: Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme

CAFF: Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna

CLCS: United Nations Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf

EIA: United States Energy Information Administration

EEZ: Economic exclusion zone

EPPR: Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response

EU: European Union

IARC: International Arctic Research Center

IASC: International Arctic Science Committee

IGO: Intergovernmental Organizations

IMO: International Maritime Organization

IR: International Relations

JAXA: Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency

JAMSTEC: Japanese Agency for Marine-Earth Science and Technology

NEFCO: Nordic Environmental Finance Corporation

NGO: Non-Governmental Organization

ONGC: Oil and Natural Gas Corporation

PAME: Protection of Arctic Marine Environment

POP: Persistent Organic Pollutant

PSI: Project Support Instrument

SAO: Senior Arctic Official

SCPAR: Standing Committee of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region

SDWG: Sustainable Development Working Group

UK: United Kingdom

UN: United Nations

UNCLOS: United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea

UNFCCC: United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

USA: United States of America

USGS: United States Geological Survey

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

When speaking of the Arctic region, polar bears, indigenous people, polar deserts and wilderness come to mind (Selin & Selin, 2008). However, over the last few decades, the Arctic has drastically evolved from what it used to be and has taken on new dimensions (Young, 2016). The present-day Arctic is crossing a major threshold of events. These major events stem from the decline and dissolution of sea ice and permafrost due to climate change, which in years to come is predicted to transform the Arctic from a permanently ice-locked area, to a region occasionally free of sea ice (Assessment A.C.I., 2004; Holland et al., 2006). A significant bearing of the liquefaction of the Arctic is a newfound economic opportunism (for nation states). The opportunity to harness the region's immense natural resources, which previously, would have been almost impossible to reach because of the natural buffering provided by the region's abundant ice (Assessment A.C.I., 2004). This new accessibility to a previously restricted source of yet untapped natural, energy, marine resources and potential fishing, shipping, tourism, and business routes (Berkman & Young, 2009; Hasanat, 2013; Koivurova, 2010; Wegge, 2015; Young, 2009), which will bring about an increase in greenhouse gas production in the Arctic (Hasanat, 2013), has awakened global interests towards the Arctic in the past couple of years, prompting new states as well as several political entities and NGOs to become actively engaged in Arctic politics. Consequently, Arctic coastal states are both mutually and independently re-establishing authority and sovereignty in the Arctic from their shorelines seaward (Berkman & Young, 2009). Exemplified by, for instance, the 2008 Ilulissat Declaration in Greenland where five littoral Arctic states asserted dominance over the Arctic "by virtue of their sovereignty, sovereign rights and jurisdiction in large areas of the Arctic Ocean" and distinctly proposed a stay off to other states on issues relating to the Arctic (Declaration, 2008, p.1). Another example is Russia's renewed aspiration to world power status, symbolized by the erection of the Russian flag at the North Pole, in a bid to lay claim on revenues from oil and gas resources in large parts of the Arctic Ocean (Koivurouva et al., 2015; Mandraud, 2014; Young, 2016). Non-Arctic states are also beginning to pursue enhanced participative roles in the Arctic Council and declaring their own Arctic policies. For example, the European Union

(EU) issued a statement on the case of its significant role in the Arctic Council as an observer and as a legitimate stakeholder on matters relating to the Arctic (Berkman & Young, 2009; Koivurova, 2010; Young, 2009). This is not peculiar to the EU alone; the Chinese have also revealed their mounting interest in Arctic politics by taking steps to affirm their right to be treated as a stakeholder, by requesting a permanent observer status in the Arctic Council. As such, Chinese research efforts on the Arctic are seen to have significantly improved in the past few years (Jakobson, 2010). Japan, although in a rather serene approach, is doing the same, as well as South Korea, as one of its regions has joined the Northern forum as an active member (Young, 2009), as well as India and Singapore. Military interests in the Arctic region are also on the rise, with Canada announcing its decision to heavily fund its military activities in the Arctic, and with Russia rebuilding fleets in the north, and stationing and exercising military forces in provocative ways (Young, 2009), and with NATO's emerging interest in the Arctic (Berkman & Young, 2009). With the emergence of these rapid changes and a new wave of interests in Artic politics, a typical element of these Evolutions is that they are fortifying the connections between what occurs in the Arctic regarded as a distinct locale and what occurs in the general worldwide framework (Berkman & Young, 2009).

1.2 Problem Statement

The Arctic has been under scrutiny of various pundits with concerns that the region is likely to erupt into a new era known as the 'great game' characterized by territorial conflicts and severe rows over the mining of natural resources, amongst the world powers (Comte, 2015; Koivurouva et al., 2015; Mandraud, 2014; Young, 2009, p. 432). Generally, these claims have been considered as "highly exaggerated". Nonetheless, more recent events suggest that overlooking this new influx of interest for the Arctic, as an "epiphenomenon" would be an oversight (Young, 2009 p. 423).
However, the problem examined here is that the current debate on governance in the Arctic region suggests that the growing external influences and the rapid change occurring in the Arctic are not within the scope and mandate of its existing governing body i.e., the Arctic Council (Young, 2009).

As new states and political entities continue to express interest in Arctic affairs, recent patterns spectacularly legitimize the proposition that the Arctic is encountering what expert analysts consider as a "state change" (Young, 2009, p. 424).Therefore, this prompts the inevitable question on the Arctic Council's ability to handle the rapid changes occurring in the Arctic, and its ability to adjust to the expanding interests and transnational challenges the region currently faces (Young, 2010). The Arctic Council is not equipped with the authority to implement or execute the recommendations it produces, nor can it take on security issues in its agenda, in spite of being an arena for diplomatic communication (Council, 2014). This indicates that the Arctic Council, a regional institution, may not be prepared to tackle the growing global interests and geopolitical concerns (Ikonen, 2016).

1.3 Research Gaps

While the scholarly community has done various research to address these issues, they have largely focused on the security, legislative and environmental aspects of the Arctic, with broadly two popular responses. On one side are those who call for a new regime for the Arctic Ocean, or even, a legally binding convention or treaty for the Arctic, in place of the Arctic Council (Koivurova, 2014; Struzik, 2010; Haukson, 2009). On the other side, are those who argue against the need for an Arctic treaty? Since the law of the sea (UNCLOS) already covers the Arctic Ocean. They maintain that, instead, the 'discourse of ecosystem-based management' approach should be adopted in dealing with issues pertaining to the governance in the Arctic, whilst maintaining an even stronger and effective Arctic Council (Hoel, 2009; Young, 2009). However, neither of these two discourses tends to close the gap identified in this thesis.

The gap identified in this research stems from the fact that, as more non-Arctic states and organizations join the queue for a chance at influence and interest in the Arctic region, there has been currently very little research conducted globally to examine how these growing interests will shape and influence the international political landscape of the Arctic, in the wake of rapid change. Therefore, this thesis examines the implications of international interests on the governance

structures in the Arctic region, in the wake of rapid change, by specifically studying the case of the Arctic Council.

1.4 Research Objectives

While climate change is the primary source of the current changes in the Arctic region, this thesis will focus mainly on the impact of the recent surge of international influence and interest for the Arctic, mostly by non-Arctic stakeholders. Therefore, the main objectives of this study are to:

- Analyze the present structure and status quo of the Arctic Council, in order to determine whether it is confronted with difficulty in addressing the surge of international interests and influence due to rapid change occurring in the region. As such, it is quintessential to review the Arctic Council's present method of operation and history to determine its weaknesses and strengths in dealing with these new challenges facing the region.

- Provide a multi-dimensional analysis of the increasing international interest for the Arctic and its implications for the international political structure of the Arctic, by examining the new emerging power dynamics confronting the region.

It is hoped that this research will have policy relevance and contribute to the existing body of academic knowledge to help better identify gaps in policy implementation and variations in Arctic governance, regional politics, international regimes, and institutions.

1.5 Research Questions

This study will be guided by two overarching research questions:

1. What are the motivations behind international interests for the Arctic in the wake of rapid change?

2. What are the implications of increased international interests and influence on Arctic governance, and how will they impact the future of the Arctic Council?

1.6 Thesis Outline

The first chapter of this thesis introduces the research by providing a background, problem statement and objectives of the study. Chapter two tends to the various fundamental themes in this study that must be defined before they can be applied in the ensuing chapters, to avoid ambiguity and unclear inductions, and, finally, a review of relevant literature. The third chapter introduces the study's theoretical framework, which centers on the two leading theories of international relations, including the key concept of geopolitics, and reflects upon their application in the analysis of the study. Chapter four presents the overall research design, the methodological framework applied, and finally, a clarification of the study's reliability and validity is provided.

The fifth chapter provides a thorough conceptualization of the Arctic Council, reviewing its present method of operation and history to determine its weaknesses and strengths in dealing with these new challenges facing the region. The sixth chapter of this volume presents a conceptual analysis of 'international interests' in the Arctic region and examines their direct implications with regard to the Arctic governance structures, by applying the theoretical framework presented in the fourth chapter. An analysis of the Arctic governance framework from a realist as well as a liberalist perspective is provided; to determine which best explains the political situation in the Arctic. Finally, the analysis presents a scenario in which perceived weaknesses to Arctic governance are seen as a means to an end for non-Arctic stakeholders. The final chapter provides a brief summary and concludes the research.

2 Literature Review & Definitions

2.1 Literature Review

A review of academic literature on the case, subject and context of a research, allows for a comprehensive understanding and the basic outline of the understudied case or subject matter (Bennett & George, 2005). The literature reviewed for this thesis can be sorted into three categories, namely: scholarly books, articles, and popular media publications. An in-depth review of the above-mentioned categories offer a detailed account of the present status of literature on Arctic policy and politics, as well as helps identify gaps within (Dwyer, 2013). A greater part of the literature reviewed in this study, are recent publications. This is due in part to the rapidly changing Arctic environment and to the fact that publications and commentaries on the Arctic are seemingly produced on a daily basis, making it a challenge to trace the present state of the Arctic literature (Dwyer, 2013), but also furthering the debate on Arctic governance, interest policy and the Arctic Council.

Over the past few years, various literatures on Arctic governance and the state of the Arctic have been produced. These papers are essential, as they frequently highlight various aspects of Arctic governance, from policy to security and economic interests and international cooperation. Therefore, for an in depth understanding of the current status of Arctic governance and politics, it is important to first review a number of these publications. Oran Young's *Creating Regimes, Arctic Accords, and International Governance*, although released over two decades ago in 1998, offers a comprehensive backdrop on the convolutions of international affairs in the Arctic. The models examined in the book are still very valid in today's Arctic geopolitical scenery. He maintained that the way to a fruitful Arctic governance is through cooperation and organization of Arctic stakeholders in the way the Arctic Council has been established (Young, 1998). Conversely, Charles Ebinger and Evie Zambetakis in *The Geopolitics of Arctic Melt* for International Affairs, 2009, suggested that the melting of the region's ice would continue to create environmental, economic and military challenges to Arctic governance. They propose technology to be the blockade to entry and, likewise, the way to long haul achievement, in the high north, arguing that a race for resource control is ongoing in the Arctic (Ebinger & Zambetakis, 2009). However, Jamie

Kraut and Heather Conley's 2010 *U.S. Strategic Interest in the Arctic: An Assessment of Current Challenges and New Opportunities for Cooperation (*Conley & Kraut 2010), recommends formulation of calculated interests and development of an action plan to preclude emergent challenges and conflicts in the Arctic region (Conley & Kraut 2010). Furthermore, Josh Rogin's Foreign Policy Article *Who is in charge of Arctic policy.* published in 2010, depicts the Arctic as an extraordinary, cutting edge opportunity for international policy making (Rogin, 2010).

While the review of publications and literatures highlighted various aspects of Arctic affairs, through diverse lenses, from scholarly and expert opinion and views on the state of the Arctic, it however, has portrayed recent western literature on the Arctic to be uneven, on the issue of the current interest surge for the Arctic and its impact on Arctic governance. Despite the patent reality of the growth of interest in the Arctic, relatively little analysis has been done on the implications of such interests on the governance structure in the Arctic, particularly the Artic Council. Rather, the majority of current literature on Arctic governance focuses largely on security, maritime trade, commercial fishing, northern sea routes, energy resources and the prospects for cooperation, particularly amongst Arctic states. Although contemporary academic literature on this topic remains scarce, a growing body of literature on the rapid changes occurring in the Arctic is developing. However, it remains largely focused on how and why Arctic states are exercising jurisdictional claims and asserting dominance over the Arctic and Arctic affairs as a whole, as well as on the legality and the complexities of the Arctic Council as a tool for sustainable Arctic governance and international cooperation in the Arctic. For example, Young (2009) in *The Arctic in Play: Governance in a Time of Rapid Change* examines the current wave of rapid change occurring in the Arctic, most especially, after the outcome of the 2008 Illulisat declaration. Where five Arctic coastal states asserted dominance over the region, by rights of sovereignty and jurisdiction in most parts of the Arctic and clearly proposed a 'stay off' to other states on issues relating to the Arctic, amongst many others, from a governance standpoint, to determine if a new regime other than the Arctic Council is a way to go (Young, 2009). He argues that concerns over the Arctic plunging into chaos are highly exaggerated, however, recommends that practical steps be taken to tackle certain governance issues in the Arctic in a time of rapid change (Young, 2009).

While several questions border on how and why Arctic states are asserting dominance and sovereignty over the northernmost part of the region, probably in pursuit of potential opportunities, the rise in global interest and the sudden shift of attention of non-Arctic states to the Arctic, is a possible challenge to existing Arctic governance structure and politics. In line with this statement, The Standing Committee of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region (SCPAR), in a 2012 report on Arctic governance, asserts that; with an increased international focus on the Arctic and Arctic governance structures, fast rising open sea and the improving accessibility of the region's rich energy and natural resources, there's a need for the Arctic Council to adapt and adjust to the new realization of a rapidly increasing economic and political significance of the Arctic (SCPAR, 2012). Furthermore, authors like Robert W. Murray and Anita Dey Nuttall, Andrew Chater and Timo koivurova, amongst others, have identified the need to explore and define the role of non-Arctic states in Arctic governance and the surge of international interest in the Arctic region. A review of these literatures is valuable to this research as they fit into its theoretical framework. Robert W. Murray and Anita Dey Nuttall (2014), in the book *International Relations and the Arctic: Understanding Policy and Governance,* argue that growing international interest in the Arctic region is a challenge to present-day international relations and that analyzing the new development in the Arctic requires new and diverse tactics (Murray & Nuttall, 2014). While Andrew Chater's work *Explaining Non-Arctic States in the Arctic Council,* published in 2016, sought to explain the interests and influences of observers in an international institution. Citing the Arctic Council as a case, the author argued that non-Arctic observers are of less influence, in comparison with Arctic states in the Arctic Council; however, they seek to contribute to Arctic environmental success and to acquire economic gain and lingering influence, in contrast to the more focused motivations of member states for the Arctic (Chater, 2016). Similarly, Timo Koivurova, in his work *Limits and possibilities of the Arctic Council in a rapidly changing scene of Arctic governance,* maintains that it will be beneficial for the Artic Council to accommodate non-Arctic state observers, as the Arctic is gradually transforming in to a region of global concern (Koivurova, 2010). Furthermore, Stokke (2013) and Sinha & Bekkevold (2017) contend that non-Arctic stakeholder interest in Arctic politics is primarily for knowledge acquisition and "capacity enhancement to implement international commitments" (p.779; p.779). Stokke (2013) further explains that Non-arctic stakeholders are no threat to either Arctic states influence, or indigenous peoples. In line with these arguments, this study seeks to contribute to the existing literature;

however, it also seeks to examine increased international interest in the Arctic from a different perspective, by examining its possible implications on the Arctic governance structure.

2.2 Definitions

Several key terms have been earlier identified in this study, but without proper definition of these terms. To avoid unclear deductions and ambiguity, it is essential to define and limit the scope of these and other central themes that may be equivocal.

2.2.1 The Arctic

There is not one single definition for the Arctic (Tamnes & Offerdal, 2014; Østreng et al., 2013); therefore, it is important to define the term as used in the context of this study, as it represents the very geographical element of the study. "*The Arctic*" is generally classified as the northernmost area of the Earth, which maintains severe topographical and climatic conditions: severe cold, ice and snow, days without sun, and sunshine at mid-night (Hasanat, 2013). However, due to conflicting theories and considerations by natural and social scientists, the southernmost boundary of the Arctic remains yet undefined (Hasanat, 2013; Østreng et al. 2013; Tamnes & Offerdal, 2014). Nonetheless, three main principles are considered in characterizing the southern boundary of the Arctic: *"The Tree Line Principle*", which describes the southern boundary of the Arctic as the northernmost point where trees grow (Kalman, 1988), separating Arctic Inuit from North American forest Indians (Sugden, 1982). It is also known as the preliminary point of the tundra (Hasanat, 2013). "*The Isotherm Principle*" considers the southernmost area to be where the mean temperature of the hottest month of the year is lower than ten degrees Celsius (10°C). The standard temperature is still, nonetheless, a subject of contention amongst researchers (Sale, 2008). "*The Latitude Principle*" defines the southern boundary as the "ring line" or the Arctic Circle, drawn at 66°34′03″ (or 66.567°) north latitude of the globe, where it all focuses northwards. The sun is unmistakable for the duration of the day at mid-summer and undetectable at mid-winter (Nuttall & Callaghan, 2000; Sale, 2008). Nonetheless, it is difficult to characterize the Arctic in its entirety just by following tree line, isotherm or latitude guidelines (Hasanat, 2013).

A working group within the Arctic Council, known as the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP), in a bid to holistically characterize the Arctic in a way that is appropriate for various scientific fields, has given a definition based on a compromise of numerous accounts. A definition which, according to Heininen & Nicol (2007, p.138), acknowledges and combines components of the Arctic ring, foliage, political limitations, oceanographic bounds and permafrost qualities. According to AMAP, the Arctic "essentially includes the terrestrial and marine areas north of the Arctic Circle (66° 32'N) and north of 62°N in Asia and 60°N in North America, modified to include the marine areas north of the Aleutian chain, Hudson Bay, and parts of the North Atlantic Ocean including the Labrador Sea" (Monitoring, 1998, p.10). This study subsequently characterizes the Arctic in line with this definition (see figure 1).

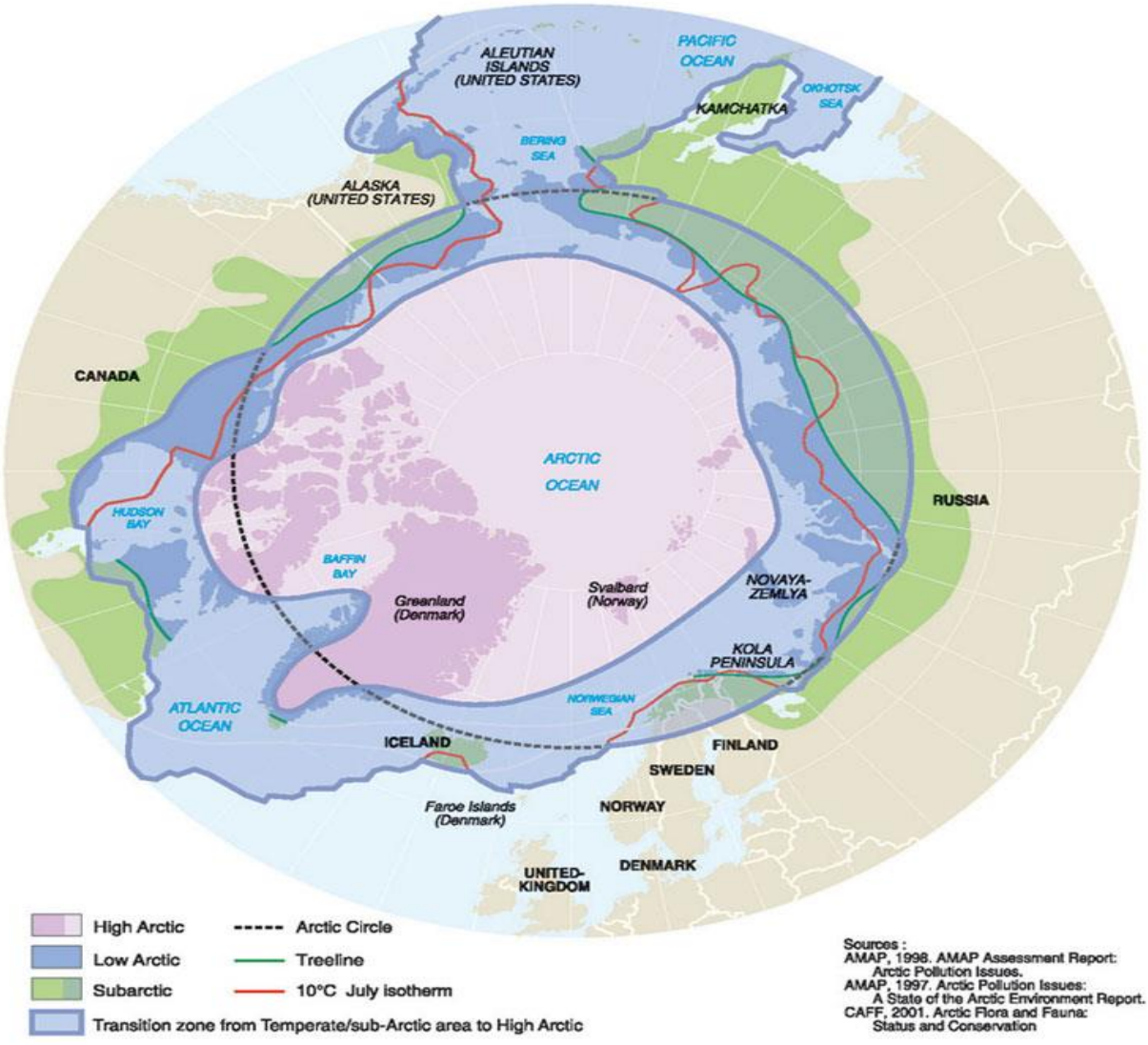

Figure 1: The Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP) definition of the Arctic. *Source: AMAP (1998)*

2.2.2 Arctic States: Arctic Geographical definition

According to Bjorkli (2015), there are two major geographical definitions of the Arctic; the first option, characterizes the Arctic as the region encircled by the North American, European, and Asian continents, in other words, the Arctic Ocean. Subsequently, this definition implies that the Arctic states are fundamentally the Arctic littoral states, specifically the United States, Russia, Canada, Denmark and Norway. This group is otherwise known as the *Arctic five* (A5) (Bjørkli, 2015). The second geographical definition maintains that the Arctic region should include areas above the Arctic Circle, or 66° 32'N latitude (Hasanat, 2013). This implies that the Arctic states also should comprise Finland, Sweden and Iceland, together with the five aforementioned littoral states, corresponding with the permanent member states of the Arctic Council, otherwise known as the *Arctic eight* (A8) (Monitoring, 1998). The Arctic states will be characterized in this thesis according to this definition. Therefore, when referring to "Arctic states" in this study, this means the latter mentioned eight states within the Arctic Council.

2.2.3 International politics

International politics overtime has evolved and arguably progressed from the academic study of politics among states, to include various political components like environmentalism, governmental and non-governmental organizations, and global civil society (Murray & Nuttall, 2014). Consequently, this theoretical expansion has ultimately led to a variety of new interpretations to the term and has produced varying and often disjointed assessments of politics in the global space (Murray & Nuttall, 2014). In many regards, the approaches to examining

modern international politics have changed and the term has subsequently earned various meanings (Murray & Nuttall, 2014). Therefore, a clear definition and limitation of the scope of the term is essential for this study, to avoid ambiguity and unclear inferences.

The modern state system came into existence, and the rights of independence and non-intervention were established under the "Westphalian conception of sovereignty" with the explicit understanding that states are sovereign and independent and without a common ruler (Murray & Nuttall, 2014, p.26). This is known as international politics. Nye (2003) further defines it as "the politics among entities with no ruler above" (p. 3). In line with this definition, this study describes international politics as the politics amongst states, which occurs without the existence of a potentate and or "collective policy for all stakeholders of the world" (Bjørkli, 2015, p.16).

2.2.4 International Regimes

International regimes, from the perspective of regional governance, offer a platform for states or other actors to collaborate on the initial steps to assessing regional issues, including, but not limited to, climate change (Krasner, 1982). As international regimes frequently identify with issues entailing "governance without government" (Rosenau & Czempiel, 1992, p. 3), states and other organizations act in accordance with the concurred standards and norms and acknowledge the legitimacy of the decision-making process. Additionally, even when agreements reached within international regimes are not legally binding, they are still "important benchmarks […] as understood by their creators" (Young, 1998, p. 4). However, it is a well-established fact that international regimes have little or no implementation power; therefore, states in this respect may be enticed to disregard the regime (Keohane & Nye (1987). The Arctic Council for instance works within these structures. Also ensuring that the observers keep to the sets of accepted rules in the Arctic and failure to adhere puts their name and status on the line. International regimes identify with the genuine effects that administrations can have on state conduct and world governmental issues (Keohane & Nye, 1987). Challenges to international regimes correlates with the actual

effects that regimes can have on state conduct and world governmental issues (Keohane & Nye, 1987).

2.2.5 Regions

A custom classification of a region assumes a geographical contiguity and a level of inter-reliance amongst states belonging to the same region. Regions began to emerge as a conceivable mainspring in global politics around the twenty-first century (Karns & Mingst, 2004), and as they directly correlate with the subject of this study, it is therefore apposite to broadly define regions in the context of this study. While some of the international relations perspectives classify regions by geographical vicinity, some others maintain that regions are socially developed and modified by behavioral and political practices. Finding a typical comprehension of the meaning of region from the international relations literature and furthermore with regards to the Arctic can be quite challenging (Paul, 2012; Johnston & Acharya, 2007; Buzan & Wæver, 2003; Katzenstein, 2005). However, Paul (2012) defines a region "as a cluster of states that are proximate to each other and are interconnected in spatial, cultural and ideational term in a significant and distinguishable manner" (p. 4). While the New Regional Theory (NRT) views a region not as a group of states, instead as a frontier that cuts through a state's territory, "positioning some parts of the state within the emerging region and others outside" (Hettne & Söderbaum, 2000, p 467). Furthermore, Katzenstein (2005) offers a more holistic approach to understanding regions by analyzing regions in three distinct categories, as defined by materialist, ideational and behavioral theories. The materialist approach simply considers traditional geopolitical features, for example sea or land power advantage; however, this approach appears to qualify the Arctic situation only to some degree.

For the purpose of this study, the ideational and behavioral approaches fit well and support the Arctic's complex regional situation (Ikonen, 2016). The ideational approach views regions as a political creation, propelled by market forces or culture. While the behavioral approach defines regions based on, how their identities and structures are formed and reformed by political systems and practices (Katzenstein, 2005). This thesis identifies the growing need for the Arctic region to

address the interest of the non-Arctic states and their move towards closer integration (Jegorova, 2013; Knecht, 2013); also, as some of the issues confronting the region, for example, climate change, are global in nature, the study of regions shapes an imperative framework for this research.

2.2.6 Intergovernmental Organizations & International Institutions

Varying in size and in membership, Intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) are established to create, maintain, and solemnize international institutions and operationalize international regimes. They are aimed at addressing unique occasions where common issues call for collaboration among member states (Karns & Karen, 2004). According to Barnett & Finnemore (2004), "organizations do much more than simply execute international agreements between states, they make authoritative decisions that reach every corner of the globe and affect areas as public as governmental spending and as private as reproductive rights" (p.1). Barnett & Finnemore (1999) maintain that IGOs are relevant and fundamental structures in Arctic politics, because they challenge the prevailing state-centric viewpoints of international relations and are an independent actor in global politics. For the purpose of this research, IGOs will be relevant in exploring the benefits and drawbacks of regulative power, as opposed to discretionary normative power, to enforce rules and regulations when examining the efficacy of the Arctic Council.

International institutions on the other hand, are viewed as the main structure for cooperation in international relations literatures (although not all). This perspective reflects the Liberalist ideas, Neo-liberalists especially, who believe that cooperation is bound to happen and easily achieved when there is common interest among states (Sterling-Folker, 2013). Furthermore, neo-liberalists suggest that regional and global regimes are essential to facilitate response to security threats, (Baylis et al., 2011). According to Mearsheimer (1994, p.8) institutions are "a set of rules that stipulate the ways in which states should cooperate and compete with one another". In other words, the rationale behind institutions is that they create circumstances where states can easily collaborate in accordance with specific guidelines and reach an inference where returns from the common agreement are balanced (Martin, 1999). For example on issues such as border disputes, the Arctic coastal states agree to abide by the laws provided in UNCLOS, as the foundation and

"to the orderly settlement of any possible overlapping claims" to reach mutual agreements (Ilulissat Declaration, 2008, p1). This study tends to view the Arctic through the lens of international institutions, where cooperation amongst states is achieved through institutions such as "international law, codes of conduct, market, diplomacy, and regimes like the Arctic Council" (Ikonen, 2016, p.14).

2.2.7 Governance

Governance within the political science field is understood as the process or method by which society is governed (Ikonen, 2016). It denotes the use of political authority and exercise of control in a society in relation to the management of its resources for social and economic development (OECD, 1995). This broad definition encompasses the role of public authorities in establishing the environment in which economic units' function and in determining the distribution of benefits and the nature of the relationship between the ruler and the ruled (Ikonen, 2016). Similarly, Fukuyama (2013) described governance as the ability of a government to create and implement laws and to provide public amenities, irrespective of its standing as democratic government or not. However, in recent times, the term governance has come to mean many things, as it is one of the most commonly used terms in theories and debates in international relations and political science. Consequently, its meaning has become ambiguous and unclear (Pierre & Peters, 2000, p.14). Therefore, as a predominant theme in this research, it is essential to define the meaning of governance in the context of this study.

Governance has developed over time to encompass global governance i.e. governance beyond or outside nation states, governmental institutions and many more. Hence, the application of the phrase "governance without government" has risen to prominence (Rosenau & Czempiel, 1992, p.3). In line with this definition, Governance in this study is understood as what encircles all actors, public and non-public, institutions and organizations, i.e., all the stakeholders who are engaged in organizing policies, and their dealings, either within countries or outside nation states (Jensen, 2008, p. 381). In other words, when situations must include different actors, public or private, domestic or international, on matters that are of shared interest across borders, including, but not limited to, for example, trade or climate change, governance plays an important role in

facilitating and creating grounds for cooperative rule and action (Stoker, 1998). The Commission on Global Governance (1995) offers a more holistic definition, "The sum of the many ways individuals and institutions, public and private, manage their common affairs. It is a continuing process through which conflicting or diverse interests may be accommodated and cooperative action may be taken. It includes formal institutions and regimes empowered to enforce compliance, as well as informal arrangements that people and institutions either have agreed to or perceive to be in their interest" (Commision,1995, p.1). Governance, as a catalyst of communal action, propounds an important framework for this study, because these definitions embody institutions that may instigate decision-making efforts to exert authority on behalf of common interests (Barnes & Foster, 2012, p. 2).

2.2.8 Power Dynamics

The debate on the role of power in the field of international relations (IR) dates back in time and scholars cannot seem to agree on one straightforward definition for power. The concept of power seems quite broad within the IR discipline (Ikonen, 2016). Barnett & Duvall (2005) also agree that, power has more than one single expression. In fact, it is grouped into four forms: *Compulsory*, also known as hard power, where one actor compels influence over another. *Institutional* power refers to indirect utilization of power by means of institutional structure, where, for example, states form international institutions to gain long-haul advantage over other states (Barnett & Duvall, 2005). *Structural* power relates to commodities (material, positional and ideational) and the trading position of states, where a blend of needs by all states and all the products offered by states, consequently creates a structure that can give authoritative power in negotiations. Lastly, *productive* power underlines the social comprehension of importance and signification, turning away from structures (Baldwin, 2013; Barnett & Duvall, 2005). For the purpose of this research, emphasis will be laid on the institutional means of power, as this is particularly relevant in the Arctic region and the study in general.

Some central themes of this research are yet to be defined, as they connect directly to the overall body of the thesis; however, these themes will be defined as the study progresses.

3. Theoretical Framework

This chapter holds the theoretical underpinnings of the study. To answer the research question of how Arctic governance structures may be challenged by external influence /international interests, the international relations principles of Realism, Liberalism and its sub-field, Geopolitics are deemed most appropriate. The objective is to look at the growing external interest in the Arctic region through these lenses and examine which theory best explains non-Arctic stakeholders' actions towards Arctic affairs and the Arctic political situation, in the wake of rapid change. To fulfill this purpose, it is imperative to present a systematic theoretical framework that will function as the backdrop in the subsequent analysis of the subject to be examined in the study.

3.1.1 Realism

A central attribute of the realist school of thought is the justification of states' pursuit of power; and the extent to which they want power (John, 2001). This view assumes that humans, essentially, state actors, possess an inborn "will to power" (Nietzsche, 2017, p.1). Realist theories tend to support a perspective that describes interstate conduct as naturally uncooperative, skeptical and undeterminable (Virtanen, 2013). The principal actors in the "international system", i.e. states, are "utility maximizers" whose foreign policy choices are based on strategic calculations about other states' rationale and the imperatives of the "anarchic structure of the system" (John, 2001, p.19). For realists, power is the defining concept to ensure states' survival, and to maximize dominance over another state; however, it should be noted that power as used here refers mainly to military and economic capabilities (John, 2001). Thus, Savigny & Marsden (2011) define power in this context as the capacity of a state to attain its goals, guarantee its survival, and the ability to

influence other states. The five general realist postulates, according to Grieco (1988), are: (i) states are the key actors in an anarchic international system and they are supposed to act as "unitary-rational" actors (p. 488). (ii) International anarchy and self-interest are the main motivation behind states' actions. (iii) States in anarchy are obsessed with power and security, thus inclined to conflict and rivalry, consequently, neglecting cooperation even when they share common interests. (iv) International institutions cannot guarantee the prospects for cooperation within states, and (v) international cooperation only occurs if it is within states' interests (Grieco, 1988). Essentially, coalitions can be made, however, states still must depend mainly on themselves for survival, i.e. self-help, and the most efficient survival tactic is to be excessively powerful. The more relatively powerful a state is compared to its rivals, the less the likelihood of it coming under attack (Mearsheimer, 2007). This explains why states, especially powerful nations, strive to exploit the international circumstance when opportune, in pursuit of economic power and military strength.
With the ice thawing at an increasingly rapid rate, consequently improving accessibility to Arctic mineral and energy resources, new sea and fishing routes and accelerated shipping possibility between the Arctic and Eurasian sea shore (Murray & Nuttall, 2014). Realist theory would suggest that, the Arctic region presents a suitable ground for powerful states with the means to attempt exploration of the new economic opportunities and develop their militaries to protect their interests in the region (Murray & Nuttall, 2014). As international interest in the Arctic continues to grow, and Artic states on the other hand continue to make strategic moves to assert dominance and sovereignty in the region, the realist theory is undoubtedly equipped with the illustrative power to explain why the Arctic has become highly important on the international political scenery.

3.1.2 Liberalism

The literature on Arctic politics during the cold war era reflected empirical and strict realist influence; however, liberalists argue that while most political Arctic studies nowadays are pragmatic, the realist leaning has declined in favor of liberalism (Østerud & Hønneland, 2017), supplanted essentially by a more conjectural desire for cooperation and tranquil advancement. The

conjectural element is not essentially concerned with just the lessening of tension, but with a type of cooperation that can be anticipated, for example, from an "open Arctic" (Jackson, 2003, p.109-120). International politics in the liberalist interpretation is not necessarily led through hard power, but instead by a host of transnational organizations, enterprises and lawful administrations, that all add to cooperation and resolution of conflict (Kalnes et al., 2010; Murray & Nuttall 2014). While realism theory centers on distinctive states and their comparative powers in a world of anarchy, liberals, instead, accentuate global society as the principal actor. Despite its focus on the institutionalized, globalized world, liberalism is not denying the actor status of the state. The state is still acknowledged as a unitary element (Kalnes et al., 2010). Like realists, liberalists do not deny the idea of states' anarchic nature either, despite the presence of international organizations, for example, the United Nations. Liberalists recognize that no organization or institution is powerful enough to dictate, rule or regulate actions of states. However, they believe, in accordance with liberalism's positivistic nature, that, the naturally anarchic system can be reorganized and curbed through establishment of numerous cooperative and institutional bodies, into a typical system of standards and norms (Kalnes et al., 2010). Through these cooperative and institutional bodies, policies, culture, people, money, goods, and services are transcending borders in greater volume than ever before. This paradigm shift has, according to liberalists, pulverized the realist assumption of autonomy and self-dependency, and has, ultimately, prompted greater inter-reliance within states, guaranteeing the likelihood of peace and cooperation (Kalnes et al., 2010; Nye, 2003).

This conception derives from the belief that mutual financial reliance makes war expensive and unrewarding. As such, liberalism as a theoretical framework earned its place in the late 20th century, particularly in Europe, with the European Union project's instantaneous economic progress and collective trade that altered the nature of international politics around the world (Kalnes et al., 2010; Nye, 2003). Moreover, the common interest to develop Arctic resources and a mutual comprehension of the fragile state of the region and its need for protection, inspired the creation of interstate cooperation organizations like the Arctic Council and the Barents-Euro Council, initiatives meant to promote regional cooperation among Arctic states (Young, 2012). Consequently, in the case of the new developments occurring in the Arctic, liberalists will argue

in favor of the need for intensified efforts on integration and cooperation and the further opening up of the Arctic.

3.1.3 Two Rival Paradigms of International Relations

The two theories of realism and liberalism, in the late 20th century, became the main paradigms for understanding international politics (Knutsen, 1997). With common goals to explain and understand the reasons and products of conflict and cooperation in international politics, these two paradigms, function as two differing points on a "spectrum". Both claiming to possess the most rational interpretation of international politics and that they each have a more principled expounding force than the other. Hence, they are in rivalry with each other (Murray & Nuttall 2014, p. 25). While the international politics structure for centuries has been leaning towards liberalism and realism respectively, it never has been totally pragmatic, nor has it been completely liberal. It has and will dependably encompass features of other worldviews (Nye, 2003). Nonetheless, many pundits have contended that the common world order is sailing towards a new reality of a more global and liberal economic and political world; however, they also acknowledge the fact that the international political structure still consists of autonomous states with unique objectives, "where security politics" are the most crucial (Kalnes et al., 2010, p.56).

3.2 Geopolitics

The theory of geopolitics has continued to evolve, historically, from the first use of the term in 1899, by Rudolf Kjellén who defined it as a prerequisite for global hegemony, to its infamous use

by Nazi Germany in the third "Reich rhetoric" (Cohen, 2014, p.11). Geopolitics as of today has taken on a moderate identity which is concerned with the "dynamic importance of how a geographical space relates with international politics" (Cohen, 2014, p.12). While geopolitics can be defined in various ways, for the purpose of this study, it is preferably understood this way. In other words, modern geopolitics serves as a model whose basic principle is the significance of geography within international politics spectrum (Tamnes & Offerdal, 2014). Promoters of such perspectives argue that international politics cannot be fully understood without the consideration of geographical components of nation states and regions (Nye, 2003).

Secondly, and particularly relevant for this thesis' focus in explaining the sudden surge of international interest for the Arctic region and, particularly, the effect of such interest on Arctic governance, a geographical area is interesting in geopolitical terms if it is strategically important (Tamnes & Offerdal, 2014). This entails that a region's geopolitical importance is in constant fluctuation and can change instantaneously. For instance, the movement of people and capital flows, or ways of communication, new trade routes, or the discovery or depletion of mineral and energy resources, can alter a region or a nation's geopolitical significance (Cohen, 2014). Up until World War II, the Arctic was one of the few unexploited regions of the world, however; over the last few decades, climate and environmental change have seen the Arctic take on a new geographical identity (Murray & Nuttall, 2014). According to international relations theory, specific regions attract "special attention" if they are resource rich and strategically attractive (Tamnes & Offerdal, 2014, p. 6). The Arctic meets these two fundamental criteria for "geopolitical prominence", with its rich oil, energy and mineral assets, immense topographical space, which may both connect and divide continents and powerful nations (Tamnes & Offerdal 2014, p. 6). Therefore, this thesis builds an enquiry framework based on the dynamic character of Arctic geopolitics. To methodically accentuate this claim and to illustrate how contemporary geopolitics is playing out in today's Arctic, and to answer the research question of motivations behind international interest surge for the Arctic and, essentially, its effect on the Arctic governance structure, the study views the Arctic region through a geopolitics lens.

3.3 Theory Application

This chapter begins by analyzing the central cleavage within the theory of international relations, first, by analyzing the two major paradigms of realism and liberalism and secondly, by conducting a systematic analysis of geopolitics as a sub-field of international relations. To understand the upsurge in international interest for the Arctic, and ultimately, its effects on Arctic governance structures, the realist and the liberalist theories are considered as appropriate theoretical frameworks for this study. They are the prominent classical schools of thought in the international relations field and they can offer elucidations and forecasts concerning "actions, actors and causes" (Jönsson, 2014, p. 19). The use of these theoretical views as frameworks is to provide further understanding of Arctic governance and politics. Subsequently, this chapter elaborates on the dynamics of geopolitics as a sub field of international relations and how it applies to the Arctic region. However, geopolitics in this study will be applied in a different fashion from how liberalism and realism will be applied. While the application of the theories of realism and liberalism will be in a more direct form, in achieving the aim of this thesis, the theory of geopolitics will be used to highlight the geopolitical importance of the Arctic. Since the core concept of modern geopolitics remains the "dynamic interaction within a geographical space and international politics" (Cohen, 2014,p.12), and the Arctic fits well within this definition, as a geographical space valuable for its strategic position, rich energy and natural resources and its ocean route advantage, accordingly, the concept of geopolitics will continually be referenced throughout the study. It is worthy of note that as with any use of theory, the approaches may not perfectly fit or produce desired answers i.e., the theoretical viewpoints may constrain our hypotheses, however, they may nonetheless provide further understanding of the purpose, objectives and research questions (Pedersen, 2013).

4. Methodology and Research Design

This chapter tends to the methodological decisions made to guarantee that the research question is irradiated as practical, and as objective as could reasonably be expected. The chapter commences with a description of the thesis methodological design and the data collection process. It then discusses the steps taken to assure validity and reliability of the research.

4.1.1 Methodological Framework

The methodological framework for this research takes a qualitative approach. Qualitative methods are deemed most appropriate, in achieving the goal and objectives of this research, due to their ability to employ inductive thinking, in building up conceivable hypotheses to clarify events and occurrences (Hancock, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Gorman & Clayton, 2005). They can draw on observations, case studies, descriptive practices, etc., to understand how concepts, processes, definitions and meanings are produced and perceived (Berg, 2001; Barbour, 2008; Miles et al., 2014; Parkinson & Drislane, 2011). Furthermore, a qualitative approach allows the mining of information from various sources (Yin, 2009) with an expansive comprehension of issues (Patton, 2002), while unveiling emergent themes and intuitions. Qualitative research also makes use of methods that enable the researcher to ask questions, portraying circumstances, topics, narratives, observations and definitions (Berg, 2001; Miles et al., 2014), and as the study aims to examine the implications of emerging international interest and influence on Arctic governance, it was therefore consistent to choose this route.

4.1. Case Study

As the Arctic continues to experience rapid change, it is acknowledged that the implications of external interests on Arctic governance may not be the only challenge facing the region, consequently, this study treats the Arctic Council as a case study of Arctic governance. Case studies are known to help give meaning and comprehensive understanding to a particular phenomenon (Punch, 1998) and allow for the deconstruction and reformation of the said phenomenon. Furthermore, case study research can bring about the realization of a new meaning, expand the reader's knowledge or corroborate an already known fact, therefore, previously unknown relationships and variables can be expected to emerge, leading to a rethink of the phenomenon being studied (Stake, 2008). In addition, insights on how things got to be the way they are can be expected to result from case studies (Stake, 1981, p.47). Finally, qualitative case studies allow a phenomenon to be explored or defined in context, with the use of a variety of data sources, enabling the researcher to study individuals, subjects, organizations, etc., from basic through complex relationships, interventions, communities, or programs (Yin, 2003). As this study is exploratory in nature and seeks to examine the impact of international interests on Arctic Council in the context of Arctic governance, the case study approach is important in achieving the aim of the thesis.

4.2 Methods

4.2.1 Data Collection

This research employs a qualitative approach for data collection and thematically analyzes the data through content analysis. Following the qualitative data analysis method, secondary sources from earlier studies were useful in achieving the research goal. One of the major reasons for choosing qualitative methods for this study is that they allowed for the use of multiple sources of data, enabling "converging lines of inquiry", i.e. several sources of evidence pointing towards a similar

bearing (Yin, 2009, p.120), thus, reinforcing the validity and consistency of the study (Bjorkli, 2015). In line with these attributes, objectives and research questions of the thesis have been enlightened using secondary data. The secondary sources considered in this thesis consist of several printed sources, including academic books and articles, government documents, and publications from scholarly research papers, and relevant websites and the Memorial University of Newfoundland's e-library. The data from secondary sources is content analyzed to generate the findings and the recommendations for the study. Therefore, the study consists of an extensive review of several literatures as well as content analysis of relevant Arctic governance documents.

4.2.2 Document Analysis

A crucial part of a research project's methodological reflections is to weigh and compare the answers from one source with data to other sources, in order to control the reliability of the data (Bjorkli, 2015). With a long history within the field of qualitative research, documents sources are defined as written sources of information available for examination, to uphold a rounded perspective of the collected data (Thagaard, 2009). It is however important to note that written documents are usually composed for reasons different from what the researcher utilizes them. Thus, the document analysis method differs completely from field methods of data collection. The written document sources considered in this thesis include several scholarly, academic and, more importantly, media publications, since Arctic issues are of dynamic and contemporary nature. The principal benefits of these written sources, for example, are, unlike interviews, they can be continually analyzed. Their scope is very expansive, and they regularly offer accurate references and data (Bjorkli, 2015). However, it should be noted that written sources are not always easily retrieved, and the researcher's selection of written sources may suffer from bias, due to only a limited variety of data collection or a "subconscious bias" from the researcher (Yin 2009, p.108). To minimize bias and reliability challenges, the online sources included in this study are data stemming only from sources adjudged as credible and reliable. However, it is almost impossible

to guarantee that the information obtained from analyzed documents are bias free and "contain the unmitigated truth" (Yin 2009, p.108).

4.3 Research Quality

One of the focal essentialities in social science research is assuring quality of the research by testing its "reliability" and "validity" (Thagaard 2009, p. 178).

4.3.1 Reliability

Reliability tests help to assert worthiness and dependability of the research, ensuring that if other researchers are to use similar procedures, as the ones followed in this study, they will produce similar findings and conclusions (Yin, 2009). Thragaard (2009, p.199) maintains that there are two forms of reliability, "internal reliability" which accounts for correlations in the composition of data between different researchers working on a similar project, while "external reliability" accounts for "replicability". However, the internal reliability will not be tested in this thesis as it is not applicable to the study, but external reliability can be tested by means of others exploring the same data material and following similar processes as the ones employed in this research to determine if they will arrive at similar conclusions (Yin, 2009, p.49). A second approach is to allow a transparent research process by providing a point-by-point illustration of the research methodology and analytical strategy, so these can be assessed in an orderly manner (Thagaard, 2009, p.199). To enable "hypothetical repetition" of the research processes employed, this thesis carefully accounts for and documents the procedures conducted throughout the study, by referencing sources and providing information on how they were obtained (Bjorkli, 2015, p.40; Steinveg, 2014), accounting for the approach and objectives of the research project, as well as the theoretical framework. Therefore, with respect to this research, it is believed that the procedures taken to achieve transparency in this study strengthen the reliability of the research.

4.3.2 Validity

Validity tests account for the credibility of the research (Steinveg, 2014). Yin (2009) further explained validity by classifying this test into three subdivisions: “construct”, “external” and “internal” validity (p. 45). With respect to this study, internal validity will not be tested, as it is exploratory in nature, while internal validity test is mainly a concern for studies that are explanatory in nature (Steinveg, 2014). Thus, the following section will focus on construct and external validity, respectively.

Construct validity tests the extent to which a study measures what it claims to be measuring, i.e. if the research is actually fulfilling what it initially set out to do (Bjorkli, 2015; Steinveg, 2014). To provide the reader a clear grasp of what exactly is being studied, the researcher must first give a clear definition of some of the dominant concepts in the study e.g., as with this thesis, Artic region, Arctic governance, international institutions, and so on. Therefore, the second chapter of this thesis is dedicated to defining major concepts that serve to ensure the construct validity of this thesis. Furthermore, the thesis employs multiple sources and relates concepts such as Arctic governance to earlier literature, also increasing the construct validity (Bjorkli, 2015).

External validity, on the other hand, represents the scope of one’s finding in a study and the level to which the outcomes of the study can be applied to other studies (Bjorkli, 2015). In this study, the Arctic Council is treated as a case of Arctic governance; it is therefore, argued that external validity in this thesis is concerned with whether the results may as well be generally applied to other cases of Arctic governance. While many of the results derived from this research can be applied to other challenges in the Arctic region, the goal of this thesis, however, is not to produce generalizable knowledge, but to produce findings that may be valid for other cases of Arctic governance and to contribute to the body of existing knowledge (Bjorkli, 2015).

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter outlines the methodological design and the challenges faced in conducting a single-case study qualitative research, by addressing the rationale behind the research design as a whole and attempts to provide transparency of the data collection process. In addition, the quality assurance of the research design is discussed by discoursing the validity and reliability of the study. With a systematic presentation of the theoretical framework, a chapter dedicated to definitions relevant to the research topic, and a clear-cut research design in place, this chapter concludes, and a new chapter, devoted to an exhaustive conceptualization of the Arctic Council as an unknown phenomenon to the larger audience, begins. An in-depth account of the Arctic Council's history, evolvement and contemporary structure is key to addressing the research problem.

5. Conceptualizing The Arctic Council

This chapter begins by presenting the Arctic Council in a historical context, describing its development from its inception till its present status, and an analysis of the structure and mode of operation of the Council and, ultimately, the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the Council in handling the rapid change occurring in the Arctic region.

5.1 The Historical Development Of The Arctic Council

The rift between the United States and the Soviet Union during the cold war, made cooperation among the Arctic states more of a dream rather than a reality (Hasanat, 2013). Nonetheless, a Finnish proposal, coupled with support from its Arctic counterparts and other actors, most especially Indigenous peoples, created the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS). The AEPS initiative started off as an idea for peace (Hasanat, 2013); with the former Soviet Union secretary general Mikhail Gorbachev's 1987 inter alia speech in Murmansk calling for the cooperation of northern states, with regards to environmental protection (Scrivener, 1989). This idea germinated and, in the summer of 1991, representatives from the Arctic states got together in Rovaniemi to sign the Rovaniemi Declaration (Declaration on the Protection of the Arctic Environment), alongside the AEPS in one single document (Council, 1991). The AEPS did have high prospects, as it focused on the eradication of environmental pollution in the Arctic; however, the binding commitments and obligatory instruments that were never met debilitated the declaration made at Rovaniemi (Scovazzi et al., 1994). On a Canadian initiative and from the AEPS, the Arctic Council, a better comprehensive governmental institution, was established (VanderZwaag et al., 2001). Former Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney first proposed the idea of an international, legally binding, institution for the Arctic (VanderZwaag et al., 2001). However, this proposal was met with opposition from the United States, until in 1995 when the

United States, through former president Bill Clinton, joined the other eight Arctic states, and the Arctic Council was established in 1996 (VanderZwaag et al., 2001). However, prior to signing, the United States laid down conditions for its participation: security would not be part of the Council's mandate, and budget commitment will not be obligatory (VanderZwaag et al., 2001). These issues were nevertheless resolved through a lengthy negotiation process. In accordance with these conditions, military and security related matters remain outside the Council's mandate. The Ottawa declaration of 1996 established the Arctic Council alongside the Joint Communiqué of the Governments (Declaration, 1996)

The Arctic Council was created as a 'high level forum' to function as a means for: advancing collaboration, coordination, and cooperation amongst Arctic states and Arctic dwellers particularly indigenous peoples, on issues concerning the Arctic. Maintaining and progressing the programs of the working groups previously launched under AEPS, i.e. Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP). Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF),Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response (EPPR), Protection of Arctic Marine Environment (PAME) (Declaration, 1996); also, to embrace terms of reference for sustainable development plans as well as execution; and to offer information, empower, train, and point out issues identified with the Arctic (Declaration, 1996). The Arctic Council, at its first meeting in 1998, adopted the "Arctic Council Rules of Procedure" (Council, 2013, p.1) and the "Terms of Reference for a Sustainable Development Program" (Council, 1998b, p.1).

5.2 Structure Of The Arctic Council

The Arctic Council was instituted in 1996 "as a high-level forum to provide a means for promoting cooperation, coordination and interaction among the Arctic States, with the involvement of Arctic indigenous communities and other Arctic inhabitants on common Arctic issues, in particular issues of sustainable protection development and environmental in the Arctic" (Council, 1996, p.1).

This section explains how the Arctic Council functions and its degree of effectiveness, by examining the Operational and Organizational Structure of the Arctic Council.

5.3 Organizational Structure

The Arctic Council is the main Arctic intergovernmental body involving each of the eight Arctic states. With two essential goals, the Arctic Council advocates for environmental protection in the Arctic region, following the work of the AEPS and to maintain a sustainable Arctic environment. This includes the socio-economic, cultural and ecological conditions of the Arctic, its indigenous peoples and other inhabitants of the region (Haavisto, 2001).

For the purpose of this research, the organizational structure of the Arctic Council implies the fundamental framework of the Council. This refers to the entities in charge of its interior as well as the policymaking functions. These entities are permanent members, permanent participants, and observers.

5.3.1 Permanent Members

These are the eight Arctic countries, namely the United States, Russia, Canada, Denmark and Norway (Arctic Ocean Littoral States, also known as the Arctic five or A5), Finland, Sweden, Iceland, who initially participated in the creation of the AEPS (Declaration,1996). It is presumed that the Arctic Council membership is exclusive to the eight Arctic states without any provision for expansion (Hasanat, 2013).

5.3.2 Permanent Participants

The permanent participant role is open specifically to indigenous peoples of the Arctic (Declaration, 1996). In accordance with the Ottawa declaration, permanent participants can be selected from amongst a majority of Arctic indigenous communities, representatives of "a single indigenous people, resident in more than one Arctic state" or "more than one Arctic indigenous people resident in a single Arctic state" (Declaration,1996, p.1). Furthermore, there is a limited

number of indigenous people groups that can be accredited to become permanent participants; this is because their total number must constantly be lower than that of the Council's permanent members (Declaration, 1996). Currently, the six permanent participants are: The Arctic Athabaskan Council; the Aleut International Association; the Saami Council; the Inuit Circumpolar Council; the Gwich'in Council International; and the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North (Hasanat, 2013). In accordance with the Council's 'rules of procedure', permanent participants are welcome to partake in all activities and meetings of the Council. Hence, permanent participants are allowed to raise "point of order" at meetings, on any subject, and the chair will decide upon these points right away (Hasanat, 2013, p. 129).

5.3.3 Observers

This role or status is granted to non-Arctic nations or entities that are positively impacting the work of the Arctic Council (Declaration, 1996). They are subsequently invited to participate in activities and meetings organized by the Arctic Council. However, a country or organization's observer status may be suspended in the event that they partake in activities that are inconsistent with the Ottawa Declaration. (Council, 2013). Hence, their status remains intact provided consensus is maintained at the ministerial meetings, in accordance with the rules of procedure (Hasanat, 2013). To apply or be recommended for observer status, the application has to be directed to the host country, and must include, in writing, an explanation of the candidate's capability to add to the Arctic Council in a positive light (Council, 2013). For an organization or separate entity, documents containing annual reports, and the organizational system of governance, total number of members, and statement of purpose, amongst many others, are required (Council, 2013). The Arctic Council may permit observers on the premise of special appointment to attend individual meetings (Declaration, 2004). In its earlier stages, the council granted observer status for certain states and organizations, for a two-year period; however, of late, it has begun approving observer status' indefinitely, i.e. permanent observer status to states and entities (Declaration, 2004). There are presently thirteen states (four ad hoc), thirteen NGOs and thirteen IGOs and Inter-Parliamentary Organizations serving as observers in the Arctic Council (Council, 2015 c).

5.4 Operational Structure

The operational structure of the Arctic Council in this thesis depicts the framework through which the Council carries out its exercise with the end goal of achieving its primary objectives, focused on Arctic environmental protection and sustainable development. These tasks are managed by three entities: The senior Arctic Officials, the secretariat and the working groups.

1. Senior Arctic Officials (SAOs)

The SAOs guide, control and monitor the subordinate bodies of the AC, by receiving and accessing reports from the working groups and other task forces essentially communicating with them, and then, consistently reporting the outcomes of these correspondences to the Arctic Council (Council, 2013). Furthermore, the SAOs oversee Arctic states and permanent participant's proposals for corporate activities and are concerned with drafting recommendations on these proposed activities ahead of the ministerial meetings (Council, 2013). The SAOs also act as special advisers on special issues pertaining to the Arctic Council. The SAOs consist of senior officials from each of the Arctic member states, and representatives from the Permanent participants (appointed from the Indigenous peoples' groups) (Council, 2013). As stated in the Arctic Council's Rules of procedure, at least two SAO meetings are required to be held on a yearly basis, however, the regularity of such meetings is dependent on the inclination of the host nation, who/which is in charge of and calling to order and assigning the chair person for the meeting (Council, 2013).

2. Secretariat

The Rules of procedure dictate that secretarial assistance should be provided by the states who assume the position of chair of the Arctic Council, however, since inception; the Arctic Council is still yet to have its permanent secretariat (Council, 2013). Nonetheless, Norway shared a "semi-secretariat" with Sweden and Denmark during their tenure from 2006 to 2012 (Chairmanship, 2006).

3. Working Groups

The Arctic Council creates working groups, task forces and various subsidiary entities to execute the primary functions of the Council. These working groups comprise of representatives from the member states government bodies, permanent participants and national ministries (Council, 2013). The mandate and the structure of the working groups are fixed at the ministerial meetings; however, they may choose to establish their own operating procedure, provided they are approved by the SAOs (Council, 2013). There are currently six (four initially created alongside the AEPS) working groups in the Arctic Council, the following section describes each of these working groups and their functions in detail (Council, 2013).

i. AMAP: Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme

AMAP was created in 1991 as a taskforce and became a working group in 1993. Its primary objective is to provide "reliable and sufficient information on the status of, and threats to, the Arctic environment, and to provide scientific advice on actions to be taken in order to support Arctic governments in their efforts to take remedial and preventive actions relating to contaminants" (Council, 2015, p.1). AMAP appraisals are drawn from scientific data released by its monitoring programs, as well as information obtained through national and international research institutions and traditional knowledge (Monitoring, 2004). Consequently, AMAP has various scientifically

based evaluations on pollution levels in the Arctic, for example, AMAP presented a report to the AEPS at its final meeting in 1997 (Council, 1997). This report brought many pollution issues to light, such as, the large-scale presence of persistent organic pollutants (POPs) due to prevailing wind patterns (Monitoring, 2004). Similarly, the 2002 report on Arctic pollution, which was presented at the ministerial meeting in Inari, recorded rising mercury levels in some areas of the Arctic (Monitoring, 2004), and prompted the ministers to consider addressing the issue through means of global cooperation (Council, 2002). AMAP's work scheme has progressed extensively. Including, but not limited to; the 2009 AMAP update report on selected climate issues of concern, the 2009 AMAP state of the environment report on selected pollution issues and their dissemination and presentation on these reports, as well as the long brief produced on the 'Snow, Water, Ice, and Permafrost in the Arctic' project (Monitoring, 2009).

ii. PAME: Protection Of The Arctic Marine Environment

PAME's working group activity, just as the name implies, is largely to protect the Arctic marine environment (Hasanat, 2013). According to PAME's website, PAME's current mandate is to "address policy and non-emergency pollution prevention and control measures related to the protection of the Arctic marine environment from both land and sea-based activities. These include coordinated action programmes and guidelines complementing existing legal arrangements" (Council, 2015b, p.1). PAME was established in 1993, along with three other working groups, to implement prioritized areas of the AEPS. In 1998, PAME worked on the assessment of present and possible shipping activities on the mandate of the ministerial meeting in Iqaluit to determine if there was the need for extra shipping measures (Council, 1998a). The mandate included working with the International Maritime Organization (IMO), on an international safety code for ships sailing on polar waters (Polar Code) (Council, 1998a). Similarly, PAME developed a proposal towards the protection of the Arctic marine environment in 2002. This plan would lay the foundation that would later produce the basic structure for a better, comprehensive and integrated approach in tackling the challenges of the Arctic littoral and aquatic environments (Council, 2002). PAME's current principle target goals are threefold: to enhance Arctic marine environmental

knowledge and act on existing knowledge, to determine the efficiency of pertinent responsibilities and advancing their application, and to establish partnerships, programs, and specialized support from within and outside the Council (Council, 2009a).

iii. EPPR: Emergency Prevention Preparedness and Response

The EPPR was created as a primary program in 1991 by the AEPS and was later converted to a working group (Hasanat, 2013; Strategy, 1991). The EPPR's underlying task included information sharing, regarding issues pertinent to crisis aversion, response, and the creation of a technique for early warning of substantial accidental pollution or an impending risk of such an occurrence (Strategy, 1991). The EPPR working group completed its evaluation of the efficiency and efficacy of provisions and agreements applicable to land-based naval or nuclear induced emergency responses in 2000 (Council, 2000a). The 2004 ministerial meeting in Reykjavik recommended the addition of natural disasters within the undertakings of the working group and acknowledged the culmination of the 'Shoreline Cleanup Assessment Technique Manual" (Declaration, 2004 p. 5). EPPR's present work plan included tending to issues such as natural disasters, radiation, feasibility analysis on response to circumpolar oil spillage, rescue scheme, prevention, awareness and response for smaller Arctic neighborhood and the safety systems development for economic and infrastructural projects, industrial and environmental safety improvement and so on (Hasanat, 2013). The EPPR has also promised further collaboration with other working groups as well as other organizations (Hasanat, 2013).

iv. CAFF: The Conservation Of Arctic Flora and Fauna

CAFF is the biodiversity working group of the Arctic Council. Just like AMAP, the working group originated with the 1991 AEPS (Holten, et al., 1998). The creation of CAFF was due to the acknowledgement that the accumulation of contaminants, and the dilapidation of natural surroundings, postured severe threats to Arctic verdure and wildlife (Strategy, 1991). Thus, CAFF was established, to this effect, as a forum to enable interaction and exchange of data and information amongst scientists, conservation activists and indigenous peoples on preservation of Arctic wildlife and flora (Holten, et al., 1998). Representatives from each member state of the Arctic Council, representatives assigned by the Permanent Participant, as well as observer nations and other entities make up CAFF (Hasanat, 2013). CAFF serves as a medium for collaboration on the use and management of natural surroundings and species, exchange of information on management practices and monitoring regimes, and to encourage informed decision-making. The working group operates by the Arctic Council Rules of Procedures (Strategy, 1993). CAFF's mandate tends to conservation of Arctic biodiversity, and to correspond with people and governments of the Arctic, on its discoveries, thereby promoting habits that guarantee the sustainability of the Arctic's biological resources (Strategy, 1993). This is done through several monitoring, evaluation and expert group exercises. To effectively preserve the natural habitat and encourage economic advancement, the status and tendencies of biodiversity, ecosystem and environmental health as well as far reaching baseline information are required (Holten, et al., 1998). Therefore, CAFF is modelling tools and frameworks essential for creating a baseline of up-to-date knowledge, and progressively providing dynamic evaluations. This sustainable and responsive tactic can produce more standard, appropriate and flexible assessments (Holten, et al., 1998).

v. SDWG: The Sustainable Development Working Group

The SDWG was transformed, under the Arctic Council, from the Task Force on Sustainable Development and Utilization under the AEPS in 1998 (Council, 1998b). The 1998 ministerial meeting in Iqaluit adopted the Terms of Reference that were required in the Ottawa declaration in 1996, which provided a procedure for proposing sustainable development projects (Council, 2012). Furthermore, the 2000 Barrow ministerial meeting espoused the Sustainable Development Framework. This document identified six major primacies for Arctic sustainable development programs (Council, 2000b). They are teaching, learning and cultural legacy; children and young people; fitness and the health of inhabitants of the Arctic; sustainable commercial practices and structural growth; the supervision of living, natural and energy resources and community opulence (Council, 2000b). To assist the SDWG with its goals, the Arctic Human Development Report (AHDR) was published in 2004. The publication highlighted major knowledge gaps in areas of increasing alteration in cultural characteristics and community welfare, industrial impacts on social feasibility and Arctic governance measures, and innovations (Council, 2004). SDWG's present work plan include suicide rate reduction amongst Arctic community dwellers; climate change, Arctic Indigenous young people and food culture; observing and promoting Indigenous languages in the Arctic. Other works include the Arctic as a significant producer of consumable goods; enhancing physical and mental health in Arctic communities via safe and available running water and sewage system; and water, sanitation and health (WASH) in each household (Council, 2015d).

vi. ACAP: The Arctic Council's Action Plan

The Arctic Council's Action Plan (ACAP) was endorsed by the Arctic Council in 2000 (Council, 2000), and was transformed into a working group in 2006. The primary objective of ACAP is to prevent, remedy and ultimately eradicate pollution in the Arctic (Council, 2000a). ACAP focuses on pollution sources and act as secondary and a consolidating force to promote state actions on the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and other pollutant sources in the Arctic (Council, 2000a).

The priorities of ACAP were selected based on AMAPs discoveries about POPs, radiation, heavyweight metals and the weakening of the ozone layer (Council, 2000a). A large number of the working group's activities are focused on the Russian Federation. e.g. the Multidimensional Collaborative scheme on the termination of Polychlorinated Biphenyl (PCB), Contaminated Waste management in the Russian region, the decrease and removal of Furans and Dioxins in the Russian federation and the diminishing of "Atmospheric Mercury" discharged by Arctic states (Hasanat, 2013, 138). The 2015-2017 ACAP project plan included publishing a 'black carbon' catalogue and developing reach-out tools such as the *Arctic Case Studies* program, to enhance living standards for indigenous people of the Arctic. ACAP continues to work towards reducing emissions of pollutants such as obsolete pesticides, mercury, dioxins, PCBs, furans, and other harmful waste (Council, 2015a).

The Arctic Council, in addition to these working groups, also formed other action programs whose programs are managed by the working groups, permanent participants, and various organizations of the Arctic Council. These action programs can be essentially translated into working groups (Council, 2009b). For instance, The Arctic Climate Impact Assessment as well as the Search and Rescue Task Force are both action programs under the auspices of the Arctic Council (Council, 2009b).

5.5 Perceived Strengths And Weaknesses Of The Arctic Council's Structure And Mode Of Operation

According to Dodds (2012), "We should not assume, therefore, that the Arctic Council simply exists… It is, like all organizations, precarious and capable of being weakened as well as strengthened – as reflected in ongoing debates about its status as a soft-law intergovernmental forum. There is nothing inevitable about the trajectory of the Arctic Council as an organization both in the present and in the future" (p. 10). In line with this statement, this section outlines perceived strengths and weaknesses in the structure and mode of operation of the Arctic Council.

5.5.1 Strengths

The Arctic Council was established with the primary aim of promoting sustainable development and environmental protection in the Arctic region (Hasanat, 2013). In this respect, it is safe to say that the council has been quite successful, and experts commend the council's efforts in this regard, as laudable and worthy of emulation (Bjorkli, 2015). One of the most imperative accomplishments of the Arctic Council is the foundation of the Arctic Climate Change Impact Assessment (ACCIA) and its policy documentation (Council, 2004). This move was considered exceptionally critical to addressing climate change in the Arctic. Besides, the Arctic Council, in its initial years, was a small, "research-driven" dialogue forum that was largely, unfamiliar within and outside the region. However, this "discussion forum" has since metamorphosed into a leading producer of scientific knowledge on various Arctic issues, most especially on climate and environmental science (Spence, 2017 p.1). As such, the council underpins high research initiatives and standards in this regard (Ziff, 2015). The Arctic Council in a brief time frame, appears to have garnered reliability and legitimacy with actors and policy makers within and outside the Arctic region to inaugurate policy priorities and positions on an expansive scope of subjects (Spence, 2017). It has become the primary platform for states, Indigenous organizations, IGOs, and NGOs to impact environmental management and sustainable development polices in the circumpolar region (Spence, 2017). Moreover, the council has championed substantial amount of significant initiatives relating to indigenous communities, Arctic and non-Arctic states, IGOS and NGOS on the global, as well as local levels (Hasanat, 2013). Additionally, the Arctic Council, since its inception, has granted observer status to non-Arctic states, and entities seen as significant contributors to its works (Arctic Council, 1996). Besides, the participant status conferred on indigenous communities of the region is a comparatively new concept in international cooperation, these exceptional and advanced governance approaches are considered by specialists to be worthy of emulation (Abele & Rodon, 2007; Heininen, 2005; Kankaanpää & Young, 2012; Stokke, 2011). Furthermore, the Arctic Council is not an international organization; rather, it is a product of soft law, an approach which keeps the council outside the authority of international law (Hasanat, 2013). However, despite being developed through soft law, by 2013 and under the auspices of the Arctic Council, the Arctic states had contracted two "binding agreements" which are the Agreement on Cooperation on Marine Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response in the Arctic and the Agreement

on Cooperation on Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue in the Arctic. Similarly, the Arctic Council, in 2015, added a "binding agreements" page to its webpage (Spence, 2017, p.12). Lastly, the council and its working groups have successfully produced policy documents, which have informed decision-making processes. For example, the working group on protection of arctic marine environment (PAME) authored a universal safety shipping code for polar waters (Polar code). This document was renamed "Guidelines of ships operating in Arctic ice-covered waters" after it was adopted by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) (Jensen, 2007, p.1).

5.5.2 Weaknesses

The Arctic Council is considered the most renowned organisation working towards environmental protection and sustainable development at the circumpolar level (Ziff, 2015). It is also acknowledged as the point of convergence for regional governance and has achieved global acceptance as the top forum for international diplomacy when it comes to Arctic affairs (Ziff, 2015). However, expectations continue to grow, as the Arctic continues to drastically evolve, and encounter complex challenges (Spence, 2017). Accordingly, experts familiar with the Council's work are often questioning its viability; they have particularly suggested that the Council's existing administrative mechanisms may not be designed for handling the present challenges facing the region (Axworthy & Simon, 2015; Conley & Melino, 2016; Nord, 2015; Spence, 2015). This suggests that there seems to be some weaknesses to the Arctic Council's structure and mode of operation, therefore, the following section outlines these perceived weaknesses

1. Soft Law Character

One of the major weaknesses identified in this thesis and by various scholars is the soft law nature of the Arctic Council (Haukson, 2009; Ikonen, 2016; Koivurova, 2014; Struzik, 2010; Valk, 2012; Young, 2010). This means that the council is not outfitted with the authority to instigate or execute the recommendations it produces, nor can it take on security issues in its agenda (Council, 2014). Its inability to make or execute legally binding decisions makes the Arctic Council more of a "decision shaper", as opposed to a "decision maker". In addition, according to Fauchald et al. (2011), the rapidly changing climate in the Arctic has posed fresh challenges that an intergovernmental forum with soft law characteristics may not be able to handle.

2. Inadequate Funding Mechanism

Another weakness to the governance structure of the Arctic Council is lack of an efficient finance mechanism (Fauchald et al., 2011; Hasanat, 2013). The council does not possess the ability to fund its own programs and projects, and funding commitment and support from member states is not obligatory. Subject to showing a guarantee of adequate funding and support from Arctic states, member states, in order to boost their reputation as an Arctic steward, may choose to fund projects serving their own interest and not necessarily that of the Council (Fauchald et al., 2011). Hence, the Council's control over its projects is restricted due to limited funding. Although the council has recently partnered with the Nordic Environment Finance Corporation (NEFCO) to develop a financial tool called the project support instrument (PSI), the PSI is however designed specifically for "actions against pollution in the Arctic" (Fauchald et al., 2011). This means that the PSI may not cover projects related or focused on any issue other than pollution. Moreover, the PSI is also a non-exclusive and non-obligatory means of financing Arctic Council's projects and programs (Secretariat, 2017); therefore, for executing other projects, the Arctic Council will still rely on outside funding (Hasanat, 2013).

3. Members' Lack Of Confidence In The Arctic Council

The Arctic Council member states seem to lack confidence in the council. Particularly, in addressing new challenges occurring in the region due to climate change effects. As exemplified by the 2008 Illulisat declaration, when the five littoral Arctic states decided to meet in Greenland to discuss climate change, environmental protection, maritime safety, amongst many other Arctic issues, outside the auspices of the Arctic Council (Rahbek-Clemmensen & Thomasen, 2018). At this meeting, the five littoral Arctic states discussed management of the increasingly accessible Arctic Ocean and *eventually,* they adopted the *Law of the Sea Convention* (UNCLOS), as a binding legislation on the use of the Arctic Ocean and conscientious management of the Arctic (Haukson, 2009). In 2010, another exclusive meeting of the five states, to this effect, took place in Chelsea, Canada. This move, by the coastal states, can be labelled as a challenge, as central Arctic issues are being addressed outside the supervision of the Council (Hasanat, 2013). Other perceived weaknesses of the council's operational and organizational structure include lack of a separate special entity for external relations management, i.e. non-Arctic states, and other entities' business and collaboration with the region; inefficient practicality of produced knowledge, i.e. this refers to the Council's inability to implement its own policy and research recommendations (Fauchald et al., 2011).

With an analysis of the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the Arctic Council's structure and mode of operation, this chapter concludes, and the next chapter begins by conceptualizing the term 'international interests' and then, analyzing these interests for the Arctic through a Realist as well as a Liberalist lens and, finally, examining their implications on Arctic governance structure, keeping in mind, the strengths and the weaknesses outlined here.

6. Conceptualizing 'International Interests' For The Arctic region

The concept of international interests, for the purpose of this thesis, is understood as a non- Arctic actor's (nation state or international entity) interest to participate or influence the political landscape of Arctic governance. The Arctic Council remains the foremost intergovernmental forum which addresses and oversees Arctic relations (Hasanat, 2013; Chater, 2015; Murray & Nuttal, 2014); therefore, the primary means to influencing or participating in Arctic governance as a non-arctic state or organization, is by becoming a member of the Arctic Council (Chater, 2015). Usually, non-Arctic states become members of the Arctic Council by applying to become an observer, and non-Arctic actors are granted observer status on the basis of their significant contribution or positive impact and support towards the work of the Arctic Council (Chater, 2015).

Although the declaration that established the Arctic Council provides for the role of observers, the Arctic Council remains a regional institution, whose primary establishment goal is to tend to issues confronting Arctic governments and people of the Arctic region (Ingimundarson, 2014). Moreover, the council's rules of procedure accord observers very little power; in other words, they are very weak actors when it comes to influencing governance and policies in the Arctic (Chater, 2016). However, in spite of their almost insignificant position in the Arctic Council, several non-Arctic states and international entities continue to seek membership as observers in the Arctic Council (Chater, 2016). Which prompts the questions that this research seeks to answer: what motivates international interest for the Arctic, and what are the implications of these external influences on the Arctic governance structures?

6.1 Motivations Behind International Interests In Arctic Affairs

The contemporary "geopolitical reality" of the Arctic is characterized by a shift from a political hotspot of "power politics" between two super powers, to an idealistic economic, political and security interest of multiple actors (Murray & Nuttall, 2014), not just domestic, but numerous international actors. However, to assert dominance and territorial sovereignty, most especially, to push their view of the Artic as a region, as opposed to an international space, the five littoral Arctic states, through the Ilulissat Declaration in 2008, resolved to address territorial disputes and resource development issues consensually rather than through international laws (Yeager, 2008). Essentially proposing a stay off to the international community on Arctic business. However, the geopolitical significance of the Arctic region can hardly be ignored by the outside world. The oil and gas deposits in the Arctic continental shelves, the discovery of new and shorter shipping routes, and the opportunity to contribute to scientific knowledge about climate change and the Arctic ecological environment (Robinson, 2007; Koivurova et al., 2015), are all contributing factors for the attraction of international interests to the Arctic region.

In line with this thesis' understanding of international interests, this section discusses, in detail, the motivations behind states and organizations' interests in Arctic governance, by examining the interests of a selected group of five non-Arctic actors: China, India, South Korea, Japan and the European Union, in desiring to sustain both their engagement and presence in the Arctic affairs.

6.1.1 Criteria For Selection

The selection of these five non-Arctic states is due to their unconventionality as Council observers. Up until recently, the Arctic Council observer position had been predominantly occupied by European nation states (Chater, 2016). However, the evolving geopolitical realities of the region that have increased the international focus on the Arctic have prompted the inclusion of more unconventional and distant actors such as China, Japan, South Korea, and India (Murray & Nuttall, 2014), while the European Union as an international organization is chosen because of its peculiar relationship with the Arctic Council. The European Union comprises of 28 European member

states, three of these states are Arctic states and members of the Arctic Council (Finland, Denmark and Sweden), and while another seven of its member states (France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Spain, United Kingdom) are accredited observers. Despite these developments, the EU has applied to become an observer in the Arctic Council, a request that is yet to be honored (Depledge, 2018).

China's interest

China remains one the world's largest foreign traders, as well as one of the most important maritime countries, based on its commercial fleet size and its overall contribution to the world's aggregate tonnage (Hong, 2014). According to Murray & Nuttall (2014), since China's economy relies heavily on foreign trade, "any events that affect international shipping will have a measurable effect on the Chinese economy and its dependence on it. Therefore, the changing physical landscape of the Arctic region will definitely have a major impact on China's economic future" (p. 581). For example, when sailing across the Arctic Ocean, China is about 4,000 nautical miles proximate to Europe and to North America's east coast. A shorter shipping route in the summer of each year will bring about significant commercial effects on the Chinese economy and compared to the Suez or Panama Canals (Jakobson, 2010), there are currently no vessel size restrictions and other regulations, and more importantly, there are currently no fees for Arctic routes (Murray & Nuttall, 2014). All of these make the Arctic Ocean highly important to the Chinese national interest. Moreover, according to the United States Geological Survey (USGS), the Arctic is said to retain about 13 and 30 percent of the world's oil and gas reserves, respectively (Hønneland 2012, p.45; Sharp, 2011, p.297), which are said to be mostly located in easily reachable areas. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the *Sea (UNCLOS)* which defines the territorial sea border of a coastal state and states' economic exclusion zones (EEZs), and determines what parties have access to the ocean spaces of the world. Contains prearrangements with respect to the definition of the external reaches of continental shelves and nautical limits (Gunitskiy, 2008; Koivurova et al., 2015; Platzoder, 1995). These prearrangements also apply to the Arctic Ocean. Article 136 of UNCLOS holds that the region outside "national jurisdiction and its resources" are the common legacy of humanity. It further states that "No state shall claim or exercise sovereignty or sovereign rights over any part of the Area or its resources. All rights in the

resources of the Area are vested in mankind as a whole, on whose behalf the International Seabed Authority shall act" (UNCLOS, 1982, p.1; Murray & Nuttall, 2014, p. 586). China, like the majority of the non-Arctic actors, is highly interested in the "exploration and exploitation" of the oil, gas and resource deposits in the area outside the jurisdiction of the Arctic states (Murray & Nuttall, 2014, p. 587). Furthermore, the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) predicts a 53 percent upsurge in world energy consumption by 2035. This upsurge will majorly be as a consequence of Asia's fast-growing economies. China and India's energy consumption alone are expected to make up about 31 percent of the world's cumulative energy consumption by 2035 (Diaz et al., 2012). Consequently, Chinese corporations, some with close ties and connections to the government, are already bringing their investments across the Arctic. In Canada, Chinese companies are showing interest in acquiring stakes in a few Canadian oil firms, a move, which is believed, will take China a step closer to their Arctic drilling goal (Hong, 2014). Similarly, China is taking a much decisive position on Polar research in the region. It has set out on various research undertakings in Arctic waters in recent years. For example, Chinese research on non-nuclear icebreaker Xue Long (snow dragon) set the record as the first vessel to cross the Arctic ocean from China (Spears, 2011), an indication of Beijing's interests in expanding its influence in the Arctic. Subsequently, The Shanghai-based Polar Research Institute of China affirmed that the Xue Long picked up "first-hand information on navigation in Arctic sea lanes as well as the oceanic environment and carried out useful exploration and practice for other nations' ships that use Arctic passages in the future" (Hong, 2014, p. 275). Many of these engagements are part of China's greater Polar scientific research endeavors. Regarding itself as a "near Arctic state" (Murray & Nuttall, 2014, p. 588), China perceives the ecological and economic occurrences in the Arctic to have "significant impact on [its] climate, ecological environment, and agricultural production as well as social and economic development" (Joensen, 2013, p. 68). China has since found ways to expand Arctic scientific collaboration and diplomatic discussions with Norway and significant participation with Canada and United States on Arctic issues, moving forward (Qisong, 2010).

Japan's Interest

Similar to China, the Arctic Ocean is of strategic importance in terms of passage route for sea bound vessels to the Japanese national interest, as the northern sea route offers a shorter shipping distance advantage between Europe and Japan, via the Arctic route (Murray & Nuttall, 2014; Weese, 2010). This provides key alternatives for Japan's economy, which presently relies heavily on the Strait of Malacca for most of its energy supplies (Borgerson, 2008). Moreover, ships setting out from Yokohama to Rotterdam cover about 13,000 miles. The Arctic course could lessen this distance and time of travel by a significant number. From the Japanese transportation ministry's viewpoint, the northern sea route could reduce the aggregate one-way dispatching costs including sailing, energy and workforce expenses by at least 40 percent (Murray & Nuttall, 2014). Japan's expectation is for the Arctic to be open to international shipping in the future and, therefore, calls for collaboration with the Arctic states and for continuous mutual efforts in establishing a new Arctic shipping regime (Murray & Nuttall, 2014). Japan is also highly interested in Polar research, and its involvement in Artic research spans over six decades (Murray & Nuttall, 2014). Japan's Arctic research concentrates on the warming amplification mechanisms, assessment of the impact of Arctic change on weather in Japan, aquatic ecosystems and fisheries, understanding the Arctic system for universal climate and imminent change, forecast of ocean ice dispersal, and their impacts on Arctic Ocean routes (Shiraishi, 2012). There are various Japanese universities and research institutes involved in Arctic research, e.g. Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA), the Japanese Agency for Marine-Earth Science and Technology (JAMSTEC), and universities such as Hokkaido University, Kitami Institute of Technology and Tokyo University of Marine Science. Japan has also established the International Arctic Research Center (IARC) in partnership with the United States. The research center focuses on incorporating and organizing the study of environmental change in the Arctic (Murray & Nuttall, 2014). Other participants of this initiative include organizations from China, Denmark, Canada, Germany, United Kingdom, Norway, and Russia (Murray & Nuttall, 2014). Japanese interest in Arctic affairs can be summed up by Japanese

embassy spokesperson, Yoichi Fujiwara's speech in Ottawa, "We are interested in environmental programs, and transportation or passage through the Arctic area, and development of resources in the Arctic Circle" (Weese, 2010, p.1).

India's Interest

India's position on the Arctic Ocean and the northern sea route is, however, quite different from its other Asian counterparts. The idea of a new shipping route with shorter distance compared to the Indian Ocean is disadvantageous to the Indian maritime sector and its national interest (Murray & Nuttall, 2014). An emergent Arctic shipping route could conceivably stall shipping traffic on the Indian ocean for four months every year, whereas, Indian ports draw a tremendous volume of worldwide commercial shipping traffic from the Indian ocean, given its location (Murray & Nuttall, 2014). Consequently, some of the major goals of India's ten-year maritime agenda include improving its maritime sector, by building a seaport of international standards, capacity and performance wise. To accommodate an expected traffic of around 2,500 million tons by the year 2020, as well as to increase India's share in international shipbuilding and seafarers in the worldwide shipping industry (Murray & Nuttall, 2014). According to Gadihoke (2012), given such activities, the Arctic's ability to take away shipping traffic from the Indian promontory will have to be fashioned into India's long haul maritime agenda. Considering that vessel sizes and delivery loads processed in the Indian seaports, present and future, which are currently spanning Indian Ocean's primary east, and west sea routes, may diminish yearly, for four months (Gadihoke, 2012).

India has long been involved in Polar research, right from the times of its Antarctic expedition since 1981 (Murray & Nuttall, 2014). Over seventy Indian institutes and universities contribute to its Polar research efforts. The environmental changes currently occurring in the Arctic are specifically important to India on account of the possible effects on "Indian monsoons…which is the main foundation of [the] Indian economy" (Nayak, 2008 p. 356). Accordingly, India's Arctic research in the Arctic region is heavily focused on climate and environmental change. So far, India has embarked on numerous Arctic expeditions and has dedicated a vessel in support of Polar research in the Arctic and Antarctic regions (Sakhuja, 2011). Likewise, India is known to be one

of the first countries to inaugurate a complete research institute, in Svalbard (Murray & Nuttall, 2014). Another major Indian interest in the Arctic region is the exploitation and exploration of natural resources (Murray & Nuttall, 2014). As India joins China, as two of the world's highest consumers of energy and major importers of oil and gas, Arctic energy resources become vital to its economic future (Diaz et al., 2012). As such, India, like China, has been making efforts to secure stakes in the Arctic energy sector. For example, Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) of India has recently obtained a 15 percent stake on one of Russia's biggest oil and gas firm's project; it has also acquired stakes in another Russian oil and gas venture in Sakhalin (Murray & Nuttall, 2014).

South Korea's Interest

South Korea, as opposed to China, India and Japan, is primarily interested in the financial advantage of Arctic shipping. Given that it is currently the world's largest shipbuilding nation, with a budding edge in engineering and shipbuilding, South Korea views the melting Arctic as a chance to secure stakes on future sea routes to guarantee steady energy supplies, and to boost up its shipbuilding industry, trading, and logistics (Shin, 2012). Therefore, it has a keen interest in the advancement of a "trans-Arctic shipping route and industry" (Wade, 2008, p.1). Former president Lee Myungbak's 2012 visit to Greenland and Norway evidenced South Korea's interest in the Arctic region's anticipated economic benefits. Just like China and Japan, South Korea also calls for the creation of a new regime that will govern shipping activities in the Arctic (Murray & Nuttal, 2014). One other South Korean interest in the Artic is Polar research. However, South Korea's journey began over three decades ago, with the Polar Research Center of Ocean Research Institute, where South Korea actively participates and collaborates with several relevant international organizations on Arctic Polar research. For example, South Korea collaborates with the International Arctic Science Committee (IASC) (Murray & Nuttal, 2014), and their research achievements and publications are internationally recognized. Moreover, South Korea continues

to manage since 2007, the Arctic research on "climate and marine species ecology" at the Dasan at Ny-Ålesund research station in Norway (Murray & Nuttal, 2014, p. 591).

European Union's Interest

The European Union has long been involved in Arctic Polar research, despite its controversial relations with the Arctic Council and Arctic policy makers, and its yet to be approved bid for observer role in the council (Chater, 2016; Depledge, 2018). In 2009, policymakers of the European Union began the application process to join the Arctic Council as a permanent observer. The development was highly welcomed and had been earlier emphasized by the Nordic and Finnish policymakers, given the ability of the European Union to fund various Arctic science and research projects (Chater, 2018). Canada, the United States and Russia were also in support of the move, as the EU was perceived to be a weak actor. However, the Inuit continually opposed the accreditation of EU's observer status, due to the partial embargo placed on seal products importation by the EU. Despite excluding indigenous seal products from the ban (Simon, 2011), Inuit leaders still opposed strongly the European ban, giving as reason that the ban has succeeded in wiping out a "primary market for their products" (Chater, 2016, p.179). The Inuit Circumpolar Council has led the campaign against accrediting the EU as a permanent observer, persuading and requesting Canada to obstruct the EU observer status in 2013. Succumbing to domestic pressure and considering the impact of the seal boycott on its economy, Canada supported the Inuit group (Chater, 2016). However, despite the controversies on the issue of EU's observer status, the organization has remained committed and relentless in its efforts on climate change and environmental pollution in the Arctic. As part of its work on climate change, European Union officials prepared an 'action plan' to research and alleviate climate and environmental change in the Arctic (Council, 2005). They provided the Council with progress reports in the following years. The EU also took the lead to sponsor an Arctic project in partnership with the United States, Denmark and Norway, on 'large marine ecosystems'. It was a project to research 'pertinent assessment strategies for assessing and improving ecosystem conditions' (Chater, 2016, p.180).

According to Chater (2016), the European Union indeed has a keen interest in "protecting the Arctic environment" (p.180).

6.2 Explaining International Interest For The Arctic Region From A Realist Perspective

The Realist theory assumes that states are primary actors in international politics, whose actions are driven by national interests, or, at best, national interests camouflaged as honest concerns (Mearsheimer, 2001). However, national interests may take distinctive structures. Some states may be primarily interested in acquiring more natural resources or land, others may be particularly interested in extending their political or economic reach into different territories, but generally, all states strive to uphold their political, territorial and economic interests (Morgenthau, 1948; Savigny & Marsden, 2011).

According to Realist thought, the primary interests of the Artic as well as non-Arctic states to seek power by expanding their economic undertakings in the region, such as oil and gas exploration and maritime transportation, could possibly fuel international tension and potential conflict (Bjorkli, 2015). Consequently, Borgerson (2008) states that, with the reappearance of Realism in Arctic affairs, "the Arctic powers are fast approaching diplomatic gridlock" (p. 65). Similarly, former Russian Deputy Prime Minister in charge of the defense industry, in a statement in 2013, asserted that "an active development of the Arctic shelf will inevitably lead to a conflict of interests between countries. Addressing these conflicts may go beyond diplomatic means. It is likely that Russian oil and gas production facilities become targets of hidden sabotage by competitor countries" (Bjorkli, 2015, p. 77; Murray & Nuttall, 2014, p. 620). However, Realists will also argue that it is in the interest of states to pursue their interests without risking armed conflict, by maintaining the balance of power and not aggravating the international community (Jönsson, 2014). This would explain why the interests of these states are formally centered on Arctic environmental protection, social wellbeing and marine life preservation, etc., while in actuality, these are secondary to their main interests (Jönsson, 2014). This implies that, Arctic states as well as non-Arctic states' interest in the Arctic region is mainly for their own selfish interest, to

maximize power, and, therefore, their concern for environmental degradation and commitment towards environmental protection and scientific research are just distractions from their real interests. Furthermore, Realists do not recognize international organizations as important or powerful actors. According to the Realist theory, international organizations function only to assist a state in reaching its political objective (Pease, 2015). Strictly speaking, they are believed to only be expedient to states when they function for their interests and advantage. While states may sometimes cooperate under international organizations on international issues, this is only when it favors them to do so. Realists will often point out the Arctic five (A5)'s decision to uphold the UNCLOS and act outside the auspices of the Arctic Council, thus undermining the council's purpose and fundamental undertakings (Jönsson, 2014; Murray & Nuttall, 2014). This would support the Realist claims that international organizations exist only if the states, who are the main actors, want them to exist and sees them advantageous to their interests. To many Realists, international organizations lose their influence, once an action is in contradiction with a state's true interest (Pease, 2015 p. 57). For example, US refusal to sign the UNCLOS. Realists do not believe that an international organization can prevent powerful states from accomplishing an objective, especially if their interests are not in line with the states on a particular subject (Pease, 2015).

6.3 Through A Liberalist Lens

While Realists assume that the nature of states is rooted in rivalry against one another, Liberalists take a more optimistic approach by arguing that states possess objective characteristics, and, in spite of self-interests, they can co-operate to develop a tranquil and affable society (Dunne et al., 2013). The key to world peace and stability, according to the Liberalists, is international cooperation among nation states as well as with other stakeholders. Without cooperation, peace is said to be unattainable. Thus, Liberalists attach great importance to the rule of law, international organizations and diplomacy, by encouraging the development of more liberal social institutions (Haar, 2009), for example, free trade agreements. The reasoning behind this is that the more interdependent states are to each other, the more important is the need for international cooperation

and collaboration efforts (Pease, 2015). Therefore, Liberalists could assert that the change in the Arctic condition, that has hauled international interest, will *"*through trade and a free market create an increasingly interdependent, peaceful and democratic*"* arena, *which*, according to Realists thinking is a mere utopian dream (Jönsson, 2014, p. 52). While Liberalists will agree on the notion that non-Artic states as well as Arctic member states all share a mutual strive for wealth and development, and that, the interests of these states are to access Arctic natural resources as well as the opportunity for new and more efficient maritime transportation routes (Jönsson, 2014).They would, however, disagree on the notion that non-Arctic states interests on issues such as climate change and environmental protection in the Arctic are mere propaganda and a camouflage for their actual interests (Jönsson, 2014). Giving that the majority of these issues are not border confined (Murray & Nuttall, 2014), non-Arctic as well as Arctic states, in their strategies, are highly focused on the need to cooperate and uphold agreements to address these issues. These strategies thus demonstrate, according to Liberalists, that the states are quite interested in climate change issues, and environmental protection, equally as much as in the Arctic natural wealth (Jönsson, 2014). However, this is not to say that the extent to which each state qualifies other values and interests, than economic and natural resource exploration does not vary from one state to another (Jönsson, 2014). A Liberalist would claim that the conduct of state actors concerning Arctic affairs has been indeed "cooperative in its nature" and despite the fact that there might be conceivable risks for strains in Arctic relations, the states have so far managed these risks in a "cooperative manner" by creating and subordinating themselves to agreements and institutions such as CLCS and UNCLOS (Jönsson, 2014, p.32). Furthermore, the choice of conflict, as opposed to cooperation, is said to be tremendously expensive, even in the Arctic. Therefore, conflict is not in the best interest of any of the actors (Bjorkli, 2015). Moreover, since Artic member states are majorly democratic, Liberalists will contend that their cooperative and democratic approaches of international relations will continue to transmit to all aspects of their Arctic relations (Jönsson, 2014). Indeed, a Liberalist could argue that the current occurrences in the Arctic may have a positive influence on global democratization. Even if, for example, an undemocratic country like China eventually becomes a significant player in the Arctic scenery, it will have no choice but to acclimate to the predominantly democratic nature, institutions and regulations (Jönsson, 2014). Furthermore, in other to benefit the most from the current Arctic situation, it is imperative, according to Liberalists, that Arctic states and other actors continue to maintain peaceful cooperative and idealistic Arctic relations. If

the current status is maintained in the Arctic, it increases the likelihood of cooperation, according to Liberalists, and this will also encourage the consolidation of Arctic international institutions, as opposed to deepening conflict lines (Buixadé Farré et al., 2014; Jönsson, 2014; Tamnes & Offerdal, 2014).

6.4 Who Wins?

In the Realist line of thought, an increasingly accessible Arctic, with its abundant natural resource reserves and waterways connecting three of the most advanced continents, might produce a significant level of tension among state actors, with predictions that the Arctic "could erupt into an armed mad dash for its resources" (Borgerson, 2008, p. 65). However, predictions going beyond this understanding have also been raised. Realists have further expressed concerns in connection to the level of non-Arctic stakeholder involvement in Arctic affairs, citing the mounting Arctic geopolitical weight of China as an example. A stronger Chinese presence, from a Realist perspective, might alter the state of international politics in the Arctic. Such an opinion has been underscored by political scientist Rob Huebert. Who stated, "What we're seeing here is the changing geopolitical realities in terms of the arrival of China as a much more assertive country in the international system" (Sibley, 2011, p.1). In similarity to Huebert's statement, Blunden (2012) depicts a Realist scenario in connection to increasing Chinese influence in the Arctic sea route and its potential shifting of the Arctic geopolitical landscape. The author asserted that "One conceivable situation of Chinese maritime vessels, entrusted with safeguarding Chinese merchant ships, in the oceans north of Russia or in the North Atlantic, would confront Russia and NATO with a challenging new security condition" (p.116). Regardless, these extrapolations are yet to gain widespread acceptance; besides, many of the cases made by Realist proponents on the Arctic, about refreezing into diplomatic congestion, and of an impending conflict over natural resources and shipping routes, are arguably difficult to envision. Considering its evolution from a greatly militarized zone to an undisturbed prosperous region just in about two and a half decades (Bjorkli, 2015). Moreover, Liberalist qualities of interstate cooperation postmodernism and a mutual interest for a peaceful Arctic had characterized the post-cold war period (Bjorkli, 2015). Also, since the Arctic as well as non-Arctic stakeholders have stated their commitment to orderly settle

claims and disputes, concerning the exploration of natural resources and international maritime traffic along the Arctic sea route, through the organizational framework of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), "A high-tension scramble for Arctic" resources is, in other words, highly unlikely (Loe et al. 2014; Tamnes & Offerdal 2014: 91). The Arctic is evolving, together with an institutionalized, international community, exemplified by the expansion of the Arctic Council's non-Arctic stakeholders, and the seemingly robust legal framework, demonstrated by the proficient arbitration and execution process of the Polar Code (Bjorkli, 2015). These and other developments evidence the fact that the international political landscape of the Arctic is characterized by mostly Liberalist values. It is, in this manner, implausible that Realist predictions will be able to defeat the current liberalist features of the Arctic's international political domain.

6.5 Implications Of Emerging External/International Interests On The Arctic Governance Structure

To understand the implications of the surge of international interest for the Arctic, it is important to first analyze how international interest has evolved in Arctic governance, by looking into how the Arctic Council observers have progressed in their role, over the years.

Up until 2004, observers in the Arctic Council remained less influential and they made very little contributions on matters raised in the council meetings. During this period, for example, the council executed more than fifty projects, of which observers sponsored only one (Chater, 2016). Furthermore, only a third of the observer delegations spoke, or gave remarks at the council meetings, and when they did, "only an average of one comment on the agenda" was credited to them (Chater 2016 p. 177). Moreover, suggestions from observers were hardly ever accepted (Chater 2016; Council, 1999). However, from 2005 onwards, the role and influence of the non-Arctic actors began to improve and continued to evolve, exemplified by events at the 2005 council meeting in Russia. This meeting marked a significant change for non-Arctic actors. On that day,

observers made eleven comments, which is a significant increase from the past years (Council, 2005). Secondly, for the first time, the EU announced that it would sponsor an Arctic Council project, in collaboration with the USA, Denmark and Norway on 'pertinent assessment strategies for assessing and improving ecosystem conditions' (Council, 2005, P.1). Thirdly, the United Kingdom presented an argument to justify the need to establish support mechanisms that will guarantee availability of funds for Arctic Council projects, and this suggestion by the UK was accepted for deliberation. These events marked the beginning of many occasions, that non-Arctic actors would meaningfully contribute and participate in discussions about Arctic policies and reforms (Council, 2005). Subsequently, observers began to function and influence policies and reforms in the Council. While these new activities and participation did not institute a major change for non-Arctic states, they have however, boosted non-Arctic stakeholder influence on Arctic policies and politics on average (Chater, 2016). For instance, observer comments have increased, although not significantly, and project sponsorship by non-Arctic actors have also increased, e.g. projects like the Nordic Environment Finance Corporation, and a few projects under the 'Arctic Contaminants Action Program' are all observer sponsored projects (Council, 2007). However, these sponsorships are still minute, when compared to the number of ongoing Arctic projects. Nonetheless, it is worthy of note that these changes have aided non-Arctic actor confidence in demanding more participative roles in Arctic governance (Chater, 2016). For instance, Netherlands, at the Arctic Council meeting, in November 2008, expressed that 'observers wish to contribute to Arctic affairs not just on research and science alone but most especially, to decision-making'. It also stated that the likelihood of observers co-financing Arctic programs is more probable, if observers are included right on time, at the very beginning phase of the project (Council, 2008, p.1).

6.6 Findings

The evaluation of the development and progression of the Arctic Council's observer role, carried out here, shows that the implications of international interest and influence on Arctic governance structures is quite normal and expected and most likely will not have a negative impact on Arctic politics. According to Liberalist predictions, the Arctic is developing into a "zone of peace" (Buixadé Farré et al., 2014, p. 9; Tamnes & Offerdal, 2014, p. 67), and the inclusion of international stakeholders in Arctic affairs ensures greater cooperation on the exploration of Arctic natural resources, waterways and climate change issues. According to Olesen & Rahbek-Clemmensen (2014), Arctic matters, involving natural resource exploration, territorial dispute settlement, military positioning and fortification, and maritime transportation, are more beneficial in cooperation than in conflict. The Arctic Council's move to gradually augment its observer base is seen as a crucial stride towards continued cooperative development, as the Arctic's stability is not determined just by interior dynamics between the Arctic states, but also "by how the international community participates in shaping the Arctic" (Tamnes & Offerdal 2014, p. 66). China, with its immense investments and prospects for the Arctic, fills in as a primary case of this statement. By accrediting China as a permanent observer in 2013, the Arctic Council made a vital move towards alleviating an impending "security-based friction" (Bjorkli, 2015, p. 85). While permanent observers are non-voting members, by having access to the Arctic Council's activities, they are welcome to take part and air their thoughts towards matters discussed in the council meetings, thereby, preventing risks of misunderstandings and misrepresentation (Bjorkli, 2015). Finally, the Arctic Council's gradual incorporation of new non-Arctic stakeholders as observers is to limit strain, to encourage discussion of contemporary issues and accentuate its legitimacy and credibility as a "remarkably successful intergovernmental forum" (Bjorkli, 2015. P.85; Ingimundarson, 2014).

However, giving the weaknesses of the Arctic Council's structure and mode of operation, earlier identified in this study, it is arguable that, with all things being equal, the admittance and inclusiveness of non-Arctic stakeholders' participation in Arctic affairs, might, in the long run, alter and altogether, reshape the existing governance framework of the Arctic. In line with the Realist theory, which holds that the primary interest of states remains the acquisition of power, the maximization of economic as well as political power, and therefore, all other interests are

secondary (Mearsheimer, 2001), it is conceivable that states could utilize their 'secondary interests' in achieving their primary goal. For instance, non-Arctic stakeholders, especially China, India, South Korea, Singapore and Japan, have become heavily involved in Arctic undertakings and have so far contributed much more than the Arctic states themselves in specific areas. China, for instance, funds more Arctic research projects compared to the USA (Long, 2016; Ingimundarson, 2014). Moreover, like Japan, India, and South Korea, China has its own research station at Svalbard, and while Singapore is yet to partake in Arctic research, it assumes a significant role in the International Maritime Organizations (IMO), which is contributory to the development of the Polar Code. Climate change issues in the Arctic certainly, is not the only motivation for the new Arctic stakeholders, but potential economic opportunities from the natural resources and maritime shipping (Ingimundarson, 2014).

For an intergovernmental forum with soft law attributes, as the Arctic Council, plagued by lack of adequate funding mechanisms and occasional lack of confidence in its framework by its permanent members, it can be argued that non-Arctic stakeholders could see these weaknesses of the council's operational and organizational structure as an avenue to improve their current standing. Ultimately, to acquire more power and control of the Arctic. Which, according to Realists, is the primary interest of non-Arctic states in the Arctic (Savigny & Marsden 2011). One possible scenario is, in the event that a country, for example China, becomes a primary stakeholder, due to its substantial financial commitment towards Arctic Council's projects, and it gets to indirectly influence the kind of projects or programs to be executed by the council, it gradually would be able to influence decisions on major aspects of the council's undertaking. Thereby, according to the Realist theory will have used its secondary interest as a means to gradually acquire its primary interests, i.e. power and control of the Arctic.

The Arctic Council in spite of the shortcomings identified here, is adjudged a successful governance body in the Arctic. Especially, as a primary platform for states, Indigenous organizations, IGOs, and NGOs to impact environmental management and sustainable development polices in the Circumpolar region (Spence, 2017) and championing substantial, significant initiatives relating to indigenous communities, Arctic and non-Arctic states, IGOS and NGOS on the global, as well as local levels. Nonetheless, the opening up of the Arctic for

exploitation and exploration of resources and maritime traffic should be responsibly and sustainably managed.

7. Summary and Conclusion

7.1 Summary

In summary, this study finds that the international politics of the Arctic region is predominantly Liberalist, with robust institutional mechanisms to guide and regulate the actions of stakeholders, and the internationalization of Artic politics through expansion of Arctic stakeholders, which poses no threat to its governance framework. However, while it has established that the implications of external international influence cannot negatively impact active governance due to its Liberalist nature, Realist prophecies cannot be completely ruled out. Although, the Realist scenarios of absolute chaos and inevitable conflict probably will not be able to defeat Liberalist features of the Arctic international politics, a Realist scenario of a systematic exploitation of the weaknesses of the Arctic governance structure to achieve one state's primary goal of power and control, is not completely unthinkable.

7.2 Conclusion

The thesis sought to examine the implications of the surge of international interest for the Arctic in the wake of rapid change as a result of climate change, with regards to Arctic governance. The goal was achieved by reviewing relevant literature and collecting information on two research questions based on the motivations for non-Arctic stakeholder interests in Arctic affairs and the

implications of these interests on Arctic politics. The topic is highly significant considering the recent developments occurring in the Arctic region. The thawing ice has not only made formerly inaccessible natural resources available for exploitation and opened up formerly impermeable sea routes for trade. It has also made the Arctic a 'center of international attention'. With the increasing external interests directed at the region, it is not irrational to think that the prevailing political situation in the Arctic may be challenged. This hypothesis establishes the core of this research project.

To conceptualize the Arctic Council as a case of Arctic governance, an in-depth analysis of its history, structure and method of operation, to determine its strengths and weaknesses in addressing new challenges facing the region, was presented. This evaluation evidenced that the Arctic Council lacks adequate financing mechanisms to fund its own projects, and due to its soft law nature, it is unable to implement the recommendations it produces, amongst many other weaknesses to the council's existing framework, which later served as a considerable factor in evaluating impacts of increased international interests on Arctic governance.

Furthermore, as international politics is a predominant theme of this thesis, a theoretical framework comprising two fundamental paradigms in international relations theory was applied; subsequently, the study examined the implications of international interests with regard to Arctic governance through Realists as well as Liberalist perspectives. While the analysis found that advocates of realism, supported by events and statements, have undeniable cause to assert that tension and conflict over Arctic benefits may become reality. Most especially, that continued non-Arctic stakeholder involvement in Arctic affairs is bound to alter the state of international politics in the Arctic. It however finds Liberalist principles to dominate Realist values and more importantly, that the international politics of the Arctic, is best defined from a Liberalist perspective, and that the region is typified by a couple of deep-rooted cooperative arrangements and institutions. Additionally, the Arctic Council's move to gradually augment its observer base is seen as a crucial stride towards continued cooperative development, therefore the internationalization of Arctic politics, through expansion of Arctic stakeholders, poses no threat to its governance framework.

However, while the findings establish that it is improbable that international interests will interject the fundamental political situation in the Arctic, they also show that due to the weaknesses of the Arctic Council's structure and mode of operations, the Realist perspective of power as a means to an end, should not be completely ruled out. However, such a scenario, probably, has a time perspective to it. One more element is that the effects of climate change may probably take a few more decades to make the Arctic completely accessible for exploration and exploitation. Whilst these gradually unfold, it is advisable that the Arctic Council develops cooperation mechanism to guarantee sustainable use and development of the Arctic

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